- Tax the churches!
- Nicholas Lemann on the New Paradigm's old problems
- Gregg Easterbrook on the coming obsolescence of oil

The Washington Monthly

APRIL 1991/$3.50

WHAT WE LOST IN THE DESERT

A debriefing

by James Fallows, James Bennet & Katherine Boo

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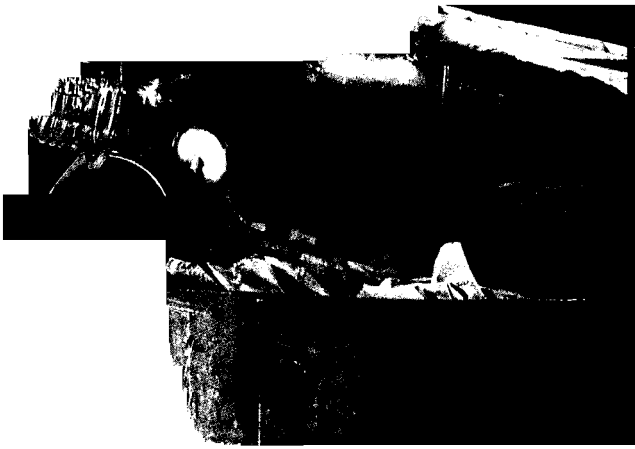

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Three, Number 4 April 1991

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LETTERS

Mirror, mirror

I considered your piece on the media coverage of Desert Shield ["How They Missed That Story," James Bennet, December] to be consistent with the no-nonsense journalism expected of your publication.

However, I would caution you about being too introspective in the only story you ran about what looks to be the event that will shape a generation of policymakers. The issues raised were poignant, but they were all addressed by analyzing the news reporters and not the newsmakers. The piece was better suited for a trade magazine and not for a reliable forum of world events. I invite your staff to reach outside the Beltway and the op-ed pages of major newspapers and attack this event with the same gusto you use in pursuing cloakroom and Capitol corridor news. James Bennet is welcome to ride with a lead cavalry squadron if he so desires.

I experienced the narcissism that Washington thrives on growing up in Alexandria and working as a public policy intern in the Pentagon. Lest the many mirrors that Washington uses to admire itself confuse you, remember what is the reflection and what is the object.

JOHN F. HILLEN III
Saudi Arabia

Mr. Hillen is a first lieutenant in the Second Armored Cavalry stationed in northern Saudi Arabia.

Trail mix

You and the Rivlin Commission wonder why the District of Columbia government needs a three-person bicycle staff ["Tilting at Windmills," January/February]. Looks like you missed the irony in criticizing governmental support for nonpetroleum transportation while decrying America's "hypnosis" over the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

The D.C. bicycling infrastructure, including bike lockers at Metro stations and extensive commuting and recreational trails, is probably the best in the Northeast. And noncyclists like you also benefit from the work of the D.C. bike staff. Your air is cleaner, your parking lots are roomier, and your petroleum dependence is smaller. Time to expand the bike staff?

CHARLES KOMANOFF AND JON ORCUTT
New York, New York

B-2 bombs

Scott Shuger's piece, "The Stealth Bomber Story You Haven't Heard" [January/February], represents yet another attempt to delude the American public into believing that the B-2 is a failed program. Through the use of assertion and hearsay, he weaves a story of intrigue and adventure.

One small example illustrates the weakness of Shuger's assertions. He asserts that the airplane will not fly, that it is aerodynamically unstable. Let me point out that the airplane has been flying since July 17, 1989. The Air Force has conducted a total of 31 sorties and accumulated in excess of 117 hours on the two flight vehicles. Flight profile testing is proceeding quite well, and the Air Force is pleased with the results.

It is also well known among aircraft designers that in many cases we give up stability of design in our modern war-fighting aircraft to achieve higher capabilities and level of performance. Some of our most capable fighters are designed with a great deal of inherent instability. The F-16 is a perfect example. Considered one of our most successful fighters, its fly-by-wire controls allowed us to build and control the aircraft in ways unthinkable in the past. A modern fighter or bomber is not meant to pull up to Gate 12 at National, onload passengers, and act as a skybus to your next destination. It is designed to push the limits. Pushing the journalistic limits seems to be the design of your article.

RANDOLPH M. BLANKS

Mr. Blanks is a colonel in the U.S. Air Force.

Shuger states that there is intentional "foot dragging" due to "fear that realistic and expedient tests would quickly produce bad news." In addition to computer-aided design and manufacturing, there were 750,000 hours of system and subsystem testing done by computers, plus 24,000 hours of wind-tunnel testing before the first B-2 got airborne. The current flight-test program involves the verification of 10 years' worth of previous computer modeling and wind-tunnel testing. This flight-test phase cannot be accomplished overnight.

The radar-measuring or stealth-testing phase follows the same philosophy as the aerodynamic performance phase. Shuger relies on statements from two Hill staff members in accusing the Air Force and Northrop of lack of independence in B-2 testing and criticizing their failure to consider techniques other than radar that may detect stealth airplanes. Although radar is the primary means of detecting aircraft at a long enough distance to be of value to air defense systems, other means could be developed (albeit at great expense). Recognizing this possibility from early on, the Air Force involved a team of independent evaluators to determine if radar or other means could be developed to detect the B-2 to any significant degree. The group has not found any projected technologies capable of detecting and engaging a B-2 to a degree that would allow it to be defeated.

Shuger states, "Another dark secret of the B-2 is that it's not very airworthy." He then elaborates on potential problems with the "four ARTS units on each B-2." The B-2 has *eight* ARTS; each side of the aircraft is controlled by four of them. A so-called cascade failure problem associated with the ARTS power supply existed earlier in the pro-

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gram. This occurrence was discovered during laboratory testing and corrected well before the first flight.

JOHN A. ROLANDO
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Rolando is a lt. colonel in the U.S. Air Force and a federal executive fellow at the Brookings Institution.

The author replies:

I did not say that the B-2 will not fly. I reported that in the opinion of well-placed insiders at Northrop, it is "not very airworthy" and is likely to crash.

As I reported, at the time my piece went to press, the two flyable B-2s had accumulated 100 flight hours. Colonel Blanks wants us to be reassured because the total is now 117. It's not hard to show how insignificant that sum is: The flight hours accumulated to date are fewer than would be used by just five B-2s flying a single round-trip mission from the western United States to targets in Moscow—less than 7 percent of the flight time that would be used on such a mission by the fleet of 75 planes that the Pentagon wants to buy.

Granted, high-performance aircraft often must give up some stability to accomplish other performance features. But in the case of the B-2, there's a lot of evidence that stability has been not compromised but sacrificed altogether. What good is a strategic bomber that can't take off in crosswinds?

As I observed in the piece, the Air Force evaluators have been anything but "independent"—for years they've resisted many concrete testing proposals that could be performed by disinterested parties without delay.

There are eight ARTS systems per B-2—but each set of four controls one wing. Lose one set and you lose the wing. Lose one wing and you lose the plane. The big problem with the ARTS is heat buildup caused by poor circuit design. The Air Force's "correction" was to devise ways to blow the heat off the circuits—a principal one was to have the pilots lower the landing gear to let in outside air (a maneuver not feasible in all phases of a mission). This approach has been described by one former Northrop engineer as "a Band-Aid solution." It was tested for only four hours prior to the inaugural flight. To this day, the circuit architecture has been left unchanged and the root problem left undiagnosed.

Slave trade

David Halberstam ["Coming In From the Cold War," January/February] is right to say that trade barriers are no panacea for the U.S. economy, but he still must answer Jesse Jackson's question: What do you do about U.S. workers who lose their jobs because foreign companies make a cheaper product by paying their workers slave wages and spending nothing on safety and antipollution devices?

The U.S. ought to ban the import of products made with slave labor or with extreme disregard for the environment and worker safety.

DOUGLAS SCZYGELSKI
Dayton, Ohio

Correction

The cover photo in our last issue should have been credited to AP/World-wide.

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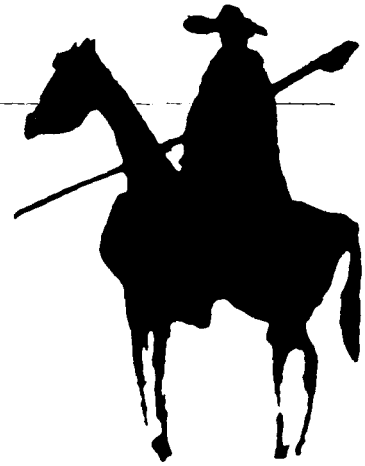

Did Barbara Boxer catch Dick Cheney! When the secretary of defense resisted efforts to bring mothers of infant children home from the Gulf, the California congresswoman reminded him that during the Vietnam war, "You were exempted from military service because you were the support of your family and obviously felt that your wife and soon-to-be-born child needed you." . . .

While Californians struggle with what the *Los Angeles Times* calls "an unprecedented budget shortfall," six state senators took off last month for a trip to Hong Kong and Manila that cost the taxpayers an estimated $21,000. The justification for the trip, according to David A. Roberti, the senate president pro tem, was that the senators could learn to understand the problems that immigrants face when they arrive in California. One would think it would be both wiser and cheaper to interview them in California, when they knew what the problems had turned out to be, rather than in Hong Kong or Manila, when they could only guess. . . .

This legislative yearning to go abroad is so strong that *Roll Call*, a tabloid that covers the business of Capitol Hill, has inaugurated a special section called "Travel & Entertainment" featuring articles about "The Unspoiled Bliss of Tortola," "New St. Lucia Resort Strikes a Perfect Balance: A Luxury Spa Plunked Down in Island Paradise," and other venues similarly suited to the earnest perusal of joint resolutions and conference committee reports. . . .

You may have noticed that, after arguing against a ground war in the Gulf in my preceding five columns, I made no mention of the matter last month. The reason is that I realized that the anti-ground war movement had turned into a pro-bombing one and that saving American lives by thoroughly "preparing" the battlefield was going to involve the slaughter of thousands of Iraqis. It also seemed possible that, once we had attained air supremacy over an enemy operating in the desert without natural cover, the moment could soon come when we might be able to win a quick ground victory at less loss of life to both sides than would be caused by continued bombing. The problem is that once we went to the war option in January, thousands of casualties were inevitable, and the fact that 99 percent of them have turned out to be Iraqi is small comfort—all of which is why we were against the war, period, and continue to think it was a terrible idea. . . .

"A Postal Inspection Service audit found properly addressed mail dumped in the trash at 76 percent of the post offices visited." That's but one of the disturbing facts that emerge from a recent study of the postal service by the Cato Institute's James Bovard. . . .

A few weeks ago, a White House source slipped us a hot document entitled "Table II-10 Proposed Outlays, by Agency," pointing out that the biggest increase was for the legislative branch. What he did not choose to emphasize is that President Bush is proposing to raise the White House budget by $2 million and hire 20 new permanent staff members. There are already 381 permanent White House employees, plus 2,000 more in the Office of the President, plus innumerable others on "detail" from other agencies who are hidden from public scrutiny because their salaries are carried on the rolls of other budgets—most notably the Pentagon's, historically the largest secret supplier of manpower for the White House. . . .

Have you heard about the t-shirt Saddam Hussein is wearing? It has a picture of April Glaspie over the words "Bitch set me up." . . .

As the government prepares its case against Manuel Noriega, the

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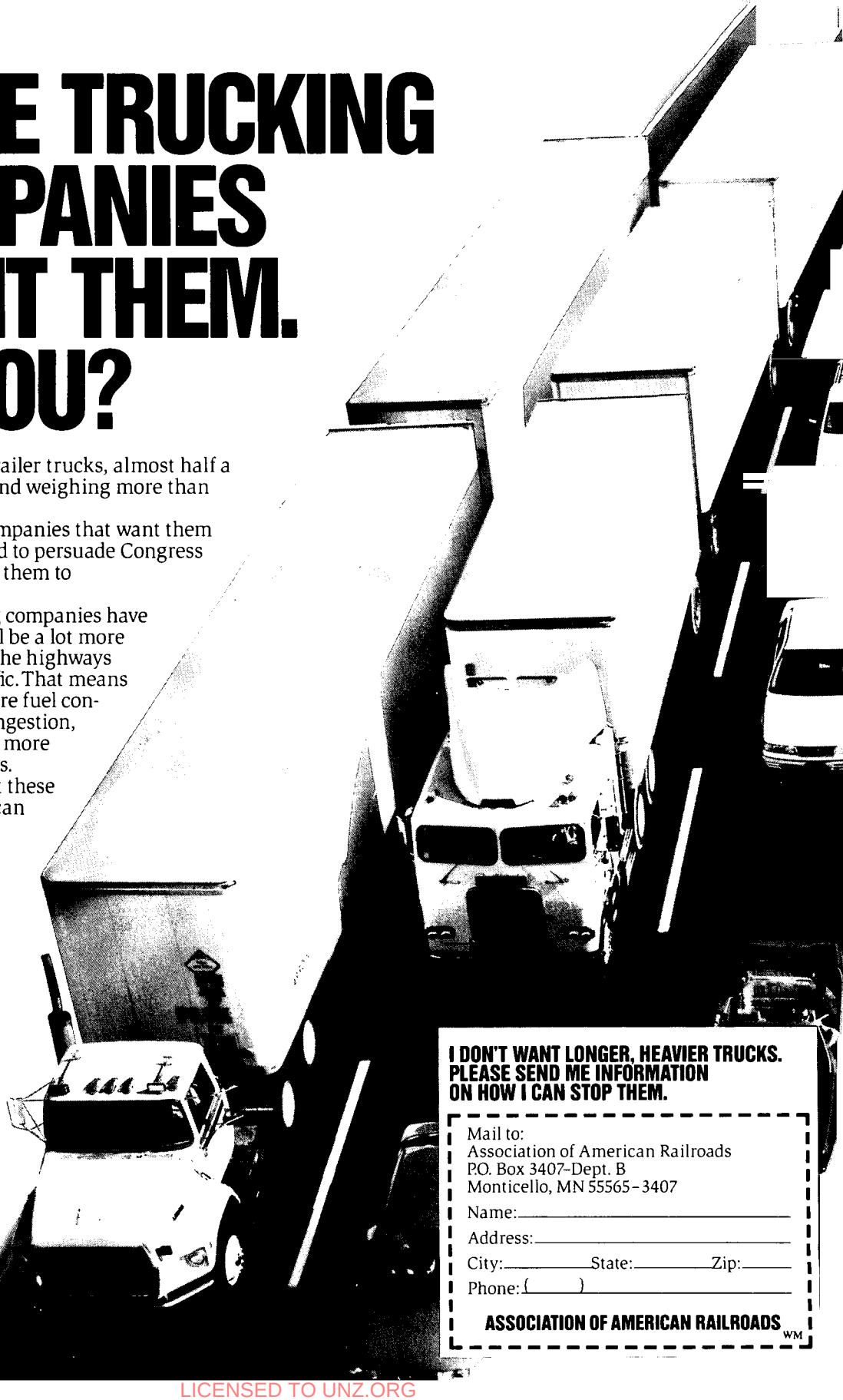

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CIA and the U.S. Army have admitted that they paid the former Panamanian dictator more than $300,000. The most recent payment came in 1986. Here is another case where the Reagan-Bush administrations turned on an erstwhile pal. As in the case of Saddam Hussein, I think we were right, if very slow, to realize we had been aiding a bad guy and to change our policy. But again as with Saddam Hussein, I think we were wrong to launch a military attack.

In the eighties, we did manage to handle another bad guy/buddy in a better way. We did not use military force against Ferdinand Marcos. Instead, we applied strong diplomatic pressure while talking to him in a way that showed we still remembered that we had once told him he was our friend. Remember the phone call from the Reagans that showed Marcos he was still being treated with dignity? The result was that we got what we wanted—Marcos's departure and Aquino as president—without bloodshed. . . .

I can't understand why people are so excited about our beating Iraq. It reminds me of the Italians who crowded the streets of Rome to welcome the victorious legions home from Ethiopia. Even more similar was the pride the Nazis took in their triumph over Poland. Poland then had the sixth largest army in the world, but it was quickly overrun because the Germans had better equipment and air supremacy. The truth is that the war on Iraq was not much of a test of how our armed forces would do against a good army and a good air force. One has to wonder how we could have so overrated Hussein's army, knowing that it had taken eight years to gain a draw with the poorly equipped and disorganized Iranians.

One thing the war did was to fill the entertainment gap for Americans for whom the time between the Super Bowl and the beginning of spring training has always loomed as a cultural desert. If that thought is a bit facetious, it does seem to me that one factor in the momentum toward war was that military action, in contrast to slow-moving embargos and diplomatic negotiations, was a great story like an earthquake or plane crash, only longer and better—a continually changing calamity that kept us glued to the set for weeks. "The war in many ways was like a Super Bowl or a thrilling war movie," one psychologist told *The Washington Times*, adding:

"There were feelings of euphoria and excitement, as in the football game. And there were feelings of letdown, just as you'd get when you left the Super Bowl game, even though you were happy to see your team slaughter the other team."

It is easy to understand why the American people were angered by Jimmy Carter's decision to withdraw from the 1980 Olympics and to impose a wheat embargo in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He deprived them of the excitement of the games and instead offered the kind of diplomatic and economic sanctions that may avoid war but practically guarantee boredom. . . .

It is clear, after the Gulf briefings, that our military has some pretty smart fellows in it. The problem is that they don't have much compunction about lying to civilians in either the Congress or the press. For example, if *Newsweek* is right in saying that we knew the inhabited Baghdad building we bombed was a shelter, but we thought it was one for big shots and their families, then the briefers were a good deal less than candid about the episode. Still, that said, I think those of us who are otherwise critical of the war must acknowledge that on the whole our military made an admirable effort to avoid inflicting civilian casualties. . . .

Life *is* unfair, but it's a good deal less unfair to the affluent and the well connected. Suppose you were an average prisoner unfairly detained in some God-forsaken jail and read about the release of Bob Simon. Ah, you would think, perhaps there is some hope for me; maybe my friends can do for me what Simon's friends did for him. Sure. All they have to do is get Henry Kissinger to write a personal letter to Mikhail Gorbachev, who in turn will instruct his personal envoy to intervene on your behalf with whoever holds the keys to your cell. . . .

Everyone knows that, despite whatever responsibility Chief Daryl F. Gates of the Los Angeles Police Department had for that brutal beating of the black man in March, he cannot be fired because he is a civil servant. Doesn't this suggest there is some validity to the *Monthly*'s long-standing concern about the unaccountability of the civil service? . . .

The stunning innocence of journalists when confronted by bureaucratic con games was never better illustrated than in a television report by the usually savvy Gary Reals of WUSA-TV in Washington. The report warned that "the District's police department faces devastating manpower reductions . . . at a time when serious crime is at an all-time high." There is not a hint in the story that the District has thousands of policemen who

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are not on the streets protecting the public, but sitting in offices or doing work of similarly marginal significance in the war against crime. . . .

A friend who recently visited Las Vegas tells me that its gaming establishments are packed with Japanese. Is it possible that we may have at last found a way to solve the balance of payments problem? . . .

While I'm on this subject, I have another suggestion. The CIA should secretly subsidize reruns of "L.A. Law" on Japanese television. Then all the bright young Japanese will desert productive enterprises to become lawyers and get laid. . . .

Time magazine reports that Clark Clifford, one of Washington's most prominent citizens for about half a century, may have been fronting for a "criminally tainted, money-laundering, Luxembourg-based global bank" that secretly controls the First American Bank of Washington, of which Clifford is the chairman. The revelation did not come as a total shock to us at the *Monthly*. Twenty-one years ago, we revealed that Clifford was fronting for another dubious banking operation, that time at The National Bank of Washington. He was a director of the bank while it was being used by Tony Boyle, the crooked president of the United Mine Workers (who was later convicted of ordering the murder of reformer Jock Yablonski), to steal money from the miners' pension fund for the benefit of the union leadership. . . .

The ACLU is helping congressional staff members fight a prohibition on honoraria for speaking engagements. Since the paid engagements are almost all financed by lobbies or other organizations with a selfish interest in congressional action, they usually do little to advance the public interest. No one is saying that a staff member should not be free to make such speeches—just that he should not be paid for them. How does that restrict his free speech? Perhaps it would if he did not have a full-time, well-paid job. As it is, he is free to speak out on any issue. All that is forbidden is for the lobby to give him a check for it. What's wrong with that, ACLU? . . .

"You're driving on the highway, and suddenly you notice a blue light flashing from a car behind you. You move over, thinking it must be the police or highway patrol. . . ." But thanks to Herbert A. Sample of the McClatchy News Service, we now know that, according to the provisions of a bill pending before the California assembly, it won't be either. "It will be the legislative sergeant at arms driving a lawmaker late, perhaps, for an appointment." . . .

The widespread nature of legislative corruption, long a favorite topic of this column, was the subject of a story that ran on the AP wire on February 6 that did not receive the attention in the big league press I thought it deserved. It pointed out that in recent months, major legislative corruption has been exposed in five states: South Carolina, Texas, California, New York, and Arizona. In Arizona, the House Judiciary chairman, Don Kenny, took a $55,000 cash bribe and stuffed it in his gym bag. This led Rep. Bobby Raymond, who got $10,000, to say, "I sold way too cheap." But as Carolyn Walker, the Senate majority whip, remarked, "We all have our prices." . . .

From the crush of bodies around a window exit of the USAir plane that crashed in Los Angeles in January, it seems clear that more space between the seats on either side of the exit would have helped the passengers escape. The British require such space because of their experience with the Manchester crash. Why don't we? Because the Office of Management and Budget wants a cost-benefit analysis. The reform is so obvious from a common-sense standpoint that only a rigid conservative would dare waste time insisting on the analysis. Unfortunately, the legacy of Reaganism is far too many rigid conservatives throughout the bureaucracy. . . .

How many hours a week would you guess public employees are supposed to work? If your answer is 40, that's the same figure the governor of Maryland came up with. But when he proposed to make it a legal requirement, he was greeted by widespread indignation among Maryland's civil servants, most of whom, it turns out, actually have been showing up for 35 hours a week and have become accustomed to the pace. . . .

When the police in Dalton, Georgia, ordered the Harvest Ministries shelter for the homeless to close because it didn't have a parking lot, Sheila Reed, the shelter's director, pointed out that the homeless don't have cars. . . .

I am delighted to report that the *Monthly*'s 20-year campaign against lawyers (not all of them; we realize that a few are truly devoted to justice) has gradually attracted much wider support. First came irreverent, or at least more irreverent than *The American Bar Association*

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Journal, professional publications like *The American Lawyer* and *The National Law Journal*. Then *The New York Times* column by David Margolick. Now, well-regarded city magazines like *Philadelphia* and *Washingtonian*, both of which have run exposés of legal hustlers in recent months, have joined the cause.

Washingtonian quotes the newest legal lion, Brendan Sullivan, justifying the lucrative fees he charges for helping such dubious clients as the manufacturers of adulterated children's fruit juices escape liability. "I don't care if the whole world comes down. My duty is to defend my client. If the world comes apart, so be it."

Why don't the Sullivans of this world realize that their "duty" does not arise until they have accepted that $100,000 fee from some crooked manufacturer? Their only justification for taking such a fee is that they would defend *anybody* in trouble. And if that is their justification, ask them just how many poor people in trouble they have defended. You will find that the Sullivans and Dershowitzes tend to represent clients who either are rich or have cases that can endow their lawyer with celebrity, or else have claims against well-heeled individuals, corporations, or insurance companies, the proceeds from which will provide generous legal fees.

A Californian has finally come up with a way to dole out the revenge lawyers deserve. His story, as told by Laura Kurtzman of the *San Jose Mercury News*, begins with his first victim, Martin Jarvis, a San Francisco personal injury lawyer:

Jarvis was having lunch at an Italian restaurant in San Francisco when, writes Kurtzman, "he got an offer he couldn't refuse.

"A man who identified himself as Michael Gambino told the personal injury lawyer that his wife and son had recently been killed in a car accident. An employee of General Electric had plowed into the family Mercedes and the air bag failed to inflate.

"G.E. and Mercedes-Benz were offering Gambino a $1.2 million settlement. There would be a meeting at Lloyd's of London, and Gambino didn't have an attorney or a thing to wear.

"No problem, said Jarvis, who shelled out $13,900 for a suit, tie, gold ring, bracelet, and Piaget watch so his client could negotiate in style. Gambino, of course, was never heard from again." . . .

An old friend of mine from back home died recently. His name was Sam MacCorkle, and he was one of the last of an always rare and now almost extinct breed, the honest political boss. The loyalty he demanded was not slavish; rather, it was a matter of going his way when the issue seemed a close call to you on the merits. He would support candidates whose integrity and devotion to the public interest he respected even if he disagreed with some of their views. In this era, where we seem to have a choice between corruption and single-issue, special-interest politics, we desperately need Sam MacCorkles. . . .

In putting together this issue, we often asked ourselves if we are being churlish, raining on the Gulf war's victory parade. It feels a little like telling a small child, beaming in her mother's high heels, that no, she still looks six and a half. Still, we have a duty to tell the truth as we see it about this ugly, unnecessary war—no matter how out of step we might feel. The U.S. is not a small child; it's a great nation. It's plenty strong enough to take it. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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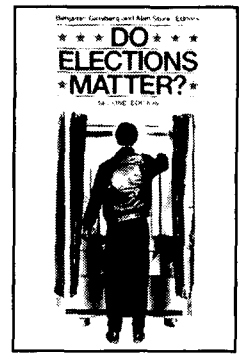

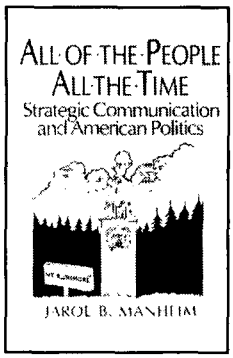

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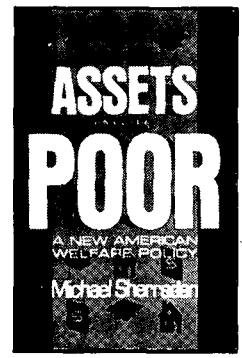

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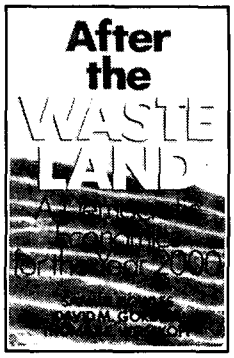

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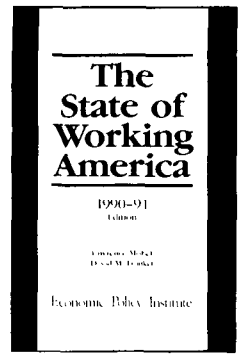

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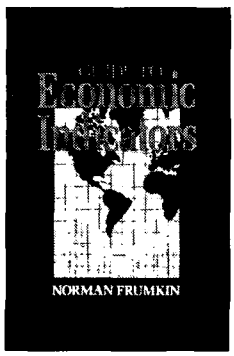

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Casualties of War

Think about it: Saddam's threat to the region ended, the price of oil stabilized, Arabs kissing Americans in the streets of Kuwait City. Three hundred twenty-three American troops dead—a tragedy, certainly, but in relative terms a miracle. Do we at the *Monthly* regret counseling patience, diplomacy, and sanctions rather than war in the Persian Gulf?

Don't bet on it. We continue to believe that this war was wrong both in principle and in practice: in principle, because war should be the last and not the first resort; in practice, because when the United States does go to war, all Americans should be in some way involved, but in this conflict most of us had to bear no burden and pay no price.

For anyone who remembers the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, or the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the notion that the U.S. has some moral obligation to defend by force of arms any "legitimate government" against foreign aggression is too silly to merit consideration. But there are two arguments against our opposition in principle that we find compelling: 1) "While the coalition patiently waited for sanctions to work, wouldn't Iraqi troops have continued to torture Kuwaitis?" 2) "Wasn't war necessary to wipe out Saddam Hussein's chemical, biological, and nuclear threat?"

The litany of horror coming out of Kuwait certainly does make the blood boil. (Tragically, the litany hasn't ended with the Americans' arrival, since the Iraqi crimes have set in motion the familiar cycle of atrocity, with Kuwaitis carrying out reprisals against collaborators—and against agitators for democracy.) But consider the other side of the ledger. Estimates of the number of dead Iraqi soldiers—not counting civilians—range from between 25,000 and 50,000 (*The New York Times*) to 150,000 (NBC, drawing on Pentagon sources); *Time* and *Newsweek* put the number at around 100,000.

Whatever the precise figure, "there were," as General Schwarzkopf put it, "a very, very large number of dead in these units, a very, very large number of dead." Many of these soldiers were draftees, often ignorant and illiterate and—judging from the mass surrenders to any Americans they could find, including journalists—generally unwilling to fight. If, as Bush repeatedly said, "Our quarrel is not with the Iraqi people," we sure had a strange way of showing it. The Kuwaitis were horribly mistreated. But dropping fuel-air explosives and cluster bombs on starving conscripts is a miserable way to alleviate human suffering.

Don't get us wrong. Unlike isolationists of the right and the left who maintain it was wrong for the U.S. to intervene at all in the Middle East, we consider it a wonder and a delight to hear an arch-realpolitician like George Bush forcefully invoke human rights in the conduct of foreign policy. America during the Cold War tended to be less than zealous in its efforts to protect human rights abroad, as our prewar relations with Iraq amply demonstrate. Bush had eight years as vice president, one and a half years as president, and plenty of evidence to deduce that Saddam Hussein was a killer who had to be contained, not coddled. Were his atrocities really less horrifying when he committed them against his "legitimate" subjects?

Still, Saddam looks like a mere neighborhood bully compared to some of the monsters we've left alone. If there was ever a case to be made for a world policeman, the Khmer Rouge made it in Cambodia. Economic sanctions would never have restrained Pol Pot, whose chief goal was to drive his country backward in time to his proclaimed "Year Zero." Along the way, his forces butchered more than a million in a truly Hitlerian bloodbath. But we did nothing. It took the Vietnamese invasion on Christmas Day, 1978, to stop the killing. (Would Bush have done something? We can find some indi-

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ation in the fact that his administration is now aiding Khmer Rouge rebels, still apparently commanded by Pol Pot; after all, the Vietnamese installed an illegitimate government.)

The past decade is replete with cases in which the U.S. looked the other way. The Ugandan army murdered up to 200,000 civilians in 1984 alone, according to estimates by the State Department; the U.S. grumbled and did nothing. Over the course of the eighties, 400,000 people died in fighting in Mozambique. How many "Save Mozambique" rallies did you attend, or even see on the news? The most notorious incident on Bush's watch was the murder of dissident students by the Chinese government two years ago. But while the U.S. chose to hunt down Manuel Noriega, other, more banal examples of evil went ignored: in El Salvador, Guatemala, South Africa, Liberia, Sri Lanka.

During the Capitol Hill debate on the war, prowar congressmen frequently quoted an Amnesty International Report, also cited by Bush, on atrocities in Kuwait. We hope they will take the same interest in acting upon other reports from Amnesty. They might turn, for example, to the evaluations of some of our allies. In Saudi Arabia, according to Amnesty's 1990 report, "Torture was reportedly common. . . . Sentences of amputation and flogging continued to be imposed and carried out." In Syria, "thousands of political prisoners, including hundreds of prisoners of conscience, continued to be detained under state-of-emergency legislation in force since 1963. . . . Torture of prisoners was said to be widespread and routine. . . ." The methods of torture sound highly Iraqi: In Egypt, the head of psychiatry at Cairo's Palestinian Red Crescent Hospital was subjected to "persistent and savage torture," including "suspension, beating, and electric shocks. He was also threatened that he would be killed if he ever spoke out about his torture."

That others commit atrocities by no means mitigates the Iraqis' crimes. It does, however, add a pragmatic edge to the moral argument against military force as the means for protecting human rights. Securing a new world order will require first and foremost consistency: consistent moral leadership and consistent application of international law. Clearly, every time some tinpot dictator strings up a dissident, we can't send in the Marines. But we also can't look the other way.

The same logic applies to the argument that we had to use force to wipe out Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction." The fact that Saddam never used such weapons during the conflict—despite confident predictions from assorted military analysts that he would—undermines the credibility of the unconventional threat he posed to his neighbors, but, again, let's assume it was for real. Between 16 and 28 nations have chemical weapons; at least 10 developing nations already have or are trying to produce biological ones, and, according to U.S. intelligence estimates, 15 will have ballistic missiles by the year 2000. Should we bomb Pakistan? India? Brazil? Burma? We can't hope to use the Air Force to stop them all. But we also can't look the other way.

The Gulf war model, like the Panama model, is dangerous not only because it played up the efficacy and even glamor of military remedies for foreign policy headaches but because it denigrated the effectiveness of nonviolent means. To control the spread of unconventional weapons and the behavior of renegade states, we have to come up with and then stick to reusable international punishments; the U.S. military, for moral and practical reasons, just isn't right for the job.

Contrary to the Bush administration line, sanctions were working against Iraq, as evidenced by Saddam's urgent demand that they be lifted as part of Gorbachev's peace package. But economic means are slow and politically risky. George Bush is a hero for stomping a fourth-rate power, while Jimmy Carter is still reviled for slapping a grain embargo on the Soviets after their invasion of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, in the past, we have seen that economic weapons, example, and diplomacy can more humanely accomplish our goals, if given the time to work: They did so in the cases of Nicaragua and Rhodesia—and in the liberation of Eastern Europe. Certainly, there will be countries that pose such an immediate, lethal threat that prompt military action is the only means to head it off. But Iraq was not such a country. A peaceful means for securing the new world order was the first casualty on January 16. □

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Wham, Bam, Thanks Saddam

Sorry for the mess we left behind

by Katherine Boo

The headless corpse of one of the [Iraqi] soldiers was on its back a short distance from the truck. Another body was wedged inside the engine compartment. Two more lay face up in the bed of the truck, their feet sticking grotesquely over the side.

—*The Washington Post*, March 3

As the ground war drew neatly to its close, it seemed the most perverse and peripheral of causes: a group of left-leaning reporters suing the government in federal court to open Dover Air Force Base to the public. They wanted us to see the body bags roll in. And in that desire, they were remarkably alone.

Just after the luckless plaintiffs lost the first court battle, the war in the Gulf was over, the issue all but moot. Yet, in a way, no episode better signifies the distance we've come since Vietnam. This time, we have no time for body bags. We're in love with the splendid little war.

A few years ago, prophets like John Mueller and Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that, in the future, first-world nations, obsessed with their economies, would recoil from costly warfare. Today, Americans bear witness to the other extreme: a renewed faith in the power of the short, clean war—restorative, affordable, and preferably a few thousand zip codes away. It's a faith at least as old as Agamemnon, who believed Priam's city would be captured in a day. Yet as American troops suit up to become the world's policemen, historical parallels should make us a little nervous. "Fool," chided Homer, "who knew nothing of all the things Zeus planned to accomplish." From Troy to Tel Aviv, Berlin to Baghdad, leaders' faith in short, clean wars has wreaked havoc on humanity. In the midst of the revelry, one couldn't help remember the spate of brisk little

Katherine Boo is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Research assistance was provided by Deborah Yavelak Sieff.*

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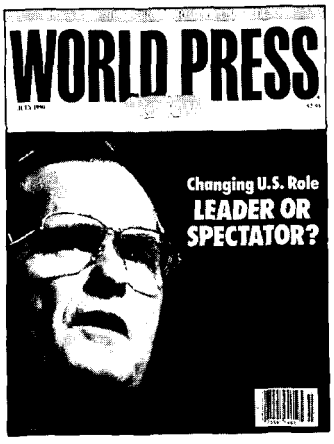

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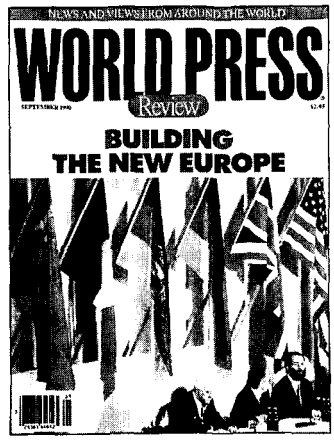

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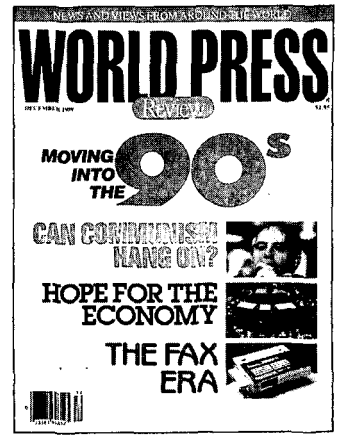

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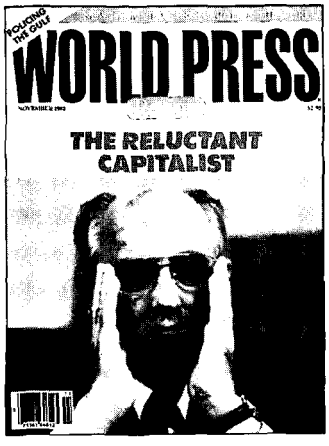

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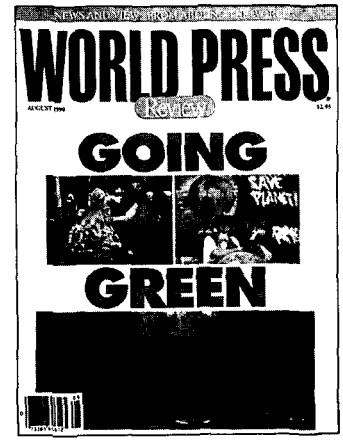

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conflicts—the Schleswig-Holstein, the Franco-Prussian, the Seven Weeks War—that convinced Kaiser Wilhelm that every modern war might be resolved in a matter of months. So in August 1914, he waved his troops off at Berlin Station, promising they'd be home before the autumn leaves fell.

I guess we could probably [estimate Iraqi casualties] if we really tried hard, but we don't really have that requirement.

—Brig. General Richard Neal, February 9

Politicians, particularly, have had a hard time resisting the appeal of clean and easy wars; you could stock a dissertation with hapless folks like the Alabama congressman who in 1861 volunteered his handkerchief to mop up all the blood that would be spilled for Confederate independence. Still, most leaders have been unable to forego the optimistic forecast, for obvious reason. Effective war-making depends not just on military and administrative prowess, but on widespread public support, as Clausewitz pointed out two centuries ago. And clean wars are the easiest sell—a truth Saddam Hussein himself understands. He started his war against Iran by promising his people a brief, decisive blitzkrieg. By war's end eight years later, there were 200,000 fewer Iraqis to remember that empty promise.

U.S. COMBAT CASUALTIES *

- 55 killed
- 155 wounded
- 30 missing
- 9 prisoners of war

* Includes 28 killed, 100 injured in Scud attack on Dhahran.

IRAQI LOSSES

- 2,085 tanks
- 962 armored vehicles
- 1,005 artillery pieces
- 103 aircraft destroyed; 139 in Iran.

How *The Washington Post* tallied the dead.

In the wake of Vietnam, the courting of public support for American warfare has become a virtual religion—one that includes such odd rites as open letters from the president to campus newspapers, pleading just cause. "Media campaigns increasingly decide whether or not there will be a war and, if there is one, how long it will last," reports James Dunnigan's manual, *How To Make War*. "The 'will to fight' can be sold like cornflakes, and increasingly it is." That lesson was not lost on Bush.

It is now clear that the president was committed to war as early as October. The critical question was how to market the idea to the American people. So, like the makers of Fords or antiperspirants, he had to establish the obsolescence of the existing product—diplomacy. In December, the president who had touted sanctions a few months earlier suddenly declared that he had never believed they would work. By January 16, when Bush announced the air strike, five months of sanctions had evolved into an "endless diplomacy." We've "exhausted all reasonable efforts," Bush intoned. "Exhausted every means." Consumers demanded a change. "The world could wait no longer."

The antidote to all this restlessness was, of course, war, which is not a simple sell, especially when it involves the liberation of an emirate 7,000 miles away. Fortunately, Bush's agents in the military, press, and the White House had been doing the advance work for months, peddling victory at discount prices. "It will be quick, massive, and decisive," declared Vice President Quayle in December. And quick, it was understood, would mean clean—a fact conveyed in the constant bandying-about of "clean sweep," "precision bombing," and "surgical strikes." As the war got under way, Lt. General Charles Horner, commander of the U.S. Air Force in the Gulf and architect of Desert Storm, promised "a very efficient military campaign." And even General Colin Powell grew uncharacteristically giddy. "First we'll cut off the Iraqi army, and then we'll kill it." Victory in two fell swoops.

Of course, the Iraqi army was a "them," not an "it." But after the first few days of the Storm, you'd be forgiven for forgetting. Objects in crosshairs exploded. Tanks were "killed." Only rarely—as when an Iraqi conscript, while surrendering, recognized a Marine from his old Chicago neighborhood—did humanity seem to impinge. Ties to Chicago somehow gave value to one Iraqi's life. It seemed strange, then, as British soldiers later sifted through the wreckage, that they found with the Iraqi corpses, not springs and gears and sprockets, but packets of processed cheese and coffee cups painted with flowers.

War is a blunt instrument. While by the end we could boast of "only" 323 American dead, the words short and clean seemed a little absurd. The war lasted a mere 43 days; cleaning the debris from Kuwait, as estimated by bomb-defusers, will take 40 years. The environmental damage may never be reversed. "I tell you, if I have anything to say about it, we're never going to get into the body count business," said Norman Schwarzkopf early on; now we understand why.

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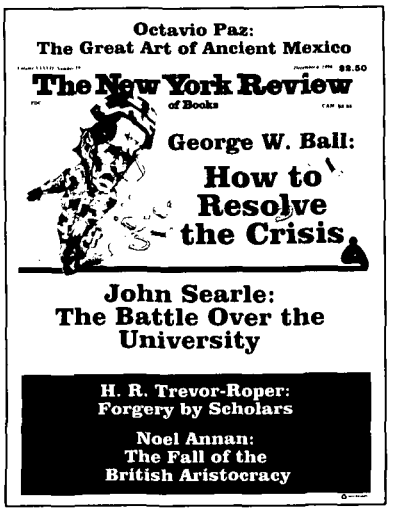
Saddam Hussein by David Levine



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WM08

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News reports tallied up to 150,000 Iraqi dead, thousands of them civilians, thousands more blown up in retreat. Pentagon officials, meanwhile, offered a more palatable summary of the Iraqi casualties: 2,085 tanks, 103 aircraft, 962 armored vehicles, 1,005 pieces of artillery.

I am glad there were so few [American] casualties, but I would have liked a little more resistance.

—Sergeant Edward Swanson of Houston, Texas

The revolting carnage shouldn't surprise us; quick wars tend to be as ugly as long ones, perhaps because we've learned how to wage them so well. What should surprise us, perhaps, is our consummate detachment from the human cost—a coolness that begins in the way leaders plan and talk about their wars.

"I tell you, if I have anything to say about it, we're never going to get into the body count business," said Norman Schwarzkopf early on. Now we understand why.

To ascertain the profitability of a proposed military action, the Greeks consulted oracles; the Romans read the entrails of chickens. Americans have cleverer tools: hundred-million-dollar computers on which whole conflagrations can be mathematically modeled. Our military analysts can enter one of a dozen air-conditioned simulation centers across the country, type a complex series of variables into a computer, and stage a dress rehearsal of any given war, deriving precise estimates of weapons effectiveness, troop mobility, casualty counts, and combat duration. So insulating is this sort of systems analysis that as bombs slammed into Baghdad, George Bush could consult his analysts and calmly claim, "We are on schedule," as if warfare were a luncheon with a queen.

Only once during the war did Pentagon officials willingly deviate from their hardware-only accounting of costs to the other side. On February 24, they allowed a select group of reporters to screen-test a videotape of Iraqis being mowed down by Apache helicopters. The reporters blanched. The officials shelved the film, sticking with the tank kills. Today, in some Pentagon cubbyhole, there's an image the rest of us will never have to see: a group of young men dropping their dinners and fleeing in panic, before Apache cannon fire rips them in half.

As the carnage on the highway out of Kuwait further attests, smart wars—even fast ones—can be just as messy as dumb ones. That contemporary paragon of the short war—the Six Day War of 1967—left so many Israelis dead that rabbis were called in to consecrate the parks of Tel Aviv as temporary graveyards. Six years later, the Israelis entered the Yom Kippur War poised for an equally swift victory. Swift it was. "At the canal I saw a company of [Israeli] tanks disappear in less than a minute," wrote General Ariel Sharon later. "An entire battalion was engulfed and destroyed before they had time to report that they were being hit." Thanks to the efficiency of portable antitank missiles, two weeks of fighting produced casualties of more than 20,000.

Perhaps because they happen so often, with little lasting international effect, these deadly, high-speed Middle Eastern wars aren't exactly emblazoned on the American memory. It's easier for us to recall the swift successes in Grenada—or Panama, about which one U.S. general would later boast, "There were no lessons learned." Of course, Bush did learn a lesson there, one that a year later helped propel us into the Gulf: Military bullying gets results faster than wearisome diplomacy. The question is, what results? Though Panama lasted only 14 days, the effort to capture one man left perhaps 4,000 Panamanian civilians dead. (That's the official Panamanian figure; the U.S. still refuses to release its numbers.) As the American press cheered the incursion, D.C.'s Spanish-language *El Latino* visited the Panamanian capital, where more than 10,000 homeless people were crammed into U.S. army hangars, five to a cubicle roughly the size of a condominium bathroom. A year after that glorious success, *The New York Times* reports that Panamanian cocaine exports are as heavy as ever.

You're superhuman. You're invincible. You're rolling into battle, and nothing can touch you.

—Lieutenant Eric Drake of Wilsie, West Virginia

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Thucydides described another democracy's swelling infatuation with war. A swift, decisive onslaught by the Athenian superpower against the "mixed rabble" of Sicily, Al-

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cibiades declared, would make his people master of all Hellas. The Athenians were quickly convinced.

> All alike fell in love with the enterprise. The older men thought that they would either subdue the places against which they were to sail, or at all events, with so large a force, meet with no disaster; those in the prime of life felt a longing for foreign sights and spectacles, and had no doubt they should come safe home again; while the idea of the common people and the soldiery was to earn wages at the moment, and make conquests that would supply a never-ending fund of pay for the future. With this enthusiasm of the majority, the few that liked it not feared to appear unpatriotic by holding up their hands against it, and so kept quiet.

The Athenians got creamed.

"By God," exclaimed President Bush a week after the war, "we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." It wasn't hard to miss the subtext: This victory has restored our faith in weaponry as the wisest political tool. Yet as we retool and replenish for further world policing, it's worth remembering that most countries facing an alien army put up more resistance than the allegedly fearsome Iraqis were able to muster. Nowhere are predictions of clean war more misleading than in what historians call "asymmetrical wars": wars between Davids and Goliaths. To the weaker, conflict is not a cool calculus of risk, expense, and expectation, but a fight for national pride in which restraint and compromise are not options. A century after the fact, no military historian can adequately explain how, in the first battle of the Zulu-British war, 1,500 highly trained English riflemen were slain by native warriors bearing spears.

A few years later, American soldiers faced their Zulus in the Philippines, a place where, after the "splendid little war" in Cuba, few U.S. leaders expected to do any fighting at all. The object, explained Colonel Frederick Funston, was simply to "sit on and hold down the little brown brothers for a few months" until the Filipinos decided they didn't want independence after all.

Four months into the conflict, a stunned General Arthur MacArthur warned the White House that victory would be anything but easy. How in the world, he demanded, could one combat "the united and apparently spontaneous action of several millions of people"? (MacArthur's grim report caused the Springfield, Illinois, *Republican* to marvel, "Why did all this 'truth-telling' become available only *after* the election?")

Virtually the same sound track played in Vietnam, where boys in pajamas somehow managed to kill 60,000 exquisitely armed American troops. We won in the Philippines; in Vietnam, we lost. In both places, we earned an animosity that still haunts us. Yet as bridges and buildings smoldered in the Baghdad suburbs, as limbless corpses poked up through the sand, Bush could claim with finality a day after the Gulf war cease-fire, "This war is now behind us."

We don't find the [dog] tags around the neck very often—they've been blown away.

—A British lance corporal on burial detail in Kuwait, March 3

In late January, a senior Iraqi official was asked by the BBC how it felt to be losing so badly. "We have already won," the official responded coolly, "because it wasn't a two-day war after all."

That assessment, of course, doesn't touch us. For if the history of war is written by the victor, so is the definition of winning. At about the same time, Charles Krauthammer could define the impending U.S. conquest in terms, not of the Middle East, but of ourselves—a national psychotherapeutic cure: "If the war in the Gulf ends the way it began—with a dazzling display of American technological superiority, individual grit, and, most unexpectedly for Saddam, national resolve—we will no longer speak of post-Vietnam America. A new, post-Gulf America will emerge, its self-image, sense of history, even its political discourse transformed."

But as we revel in our psychic kill, it's worth considering the 12th-century Normans who, self-image enhanced by their easy conquest of England, planned a brisk overrun of the farmers and peasants of Ireland. Almost 900 years later, Irish bombs explode in Victoria Station.

If history has anything to teach us about war, it's that we should be wary of the term "clean victory," skeptical of mantras about "kicking ass." Victory, as the Israelis learned in Lebanon, may be just another word for *bellum interruptum*. When we finally "won" it, the Gulf war had cost us perhaps $30 billion and 91 lives. For the Iraqis, the casualties may be more than a thousand times higher. Yet true victory—political stability, respect for human rights, democratic leadership, even stable oil prices—is no more assured in the Middle East, a region with more conventional weapons than all of NATO, than it was before we dropped 10 times the tonnage of Hiroshima on the Gulf.

In late February, Palestinians gathered on the rooftops of the West Bank, cheering the Scud missiles as they arced toward Tel Aviv. A week later, Shiite fundamentalists stirred in Basra, armed by their Iranian brethren. Could it be that this new war, like the old ones, suggests another meaning for the Greeks' winged victory—something neither fleet nor transcendent? A promise, rather, that hovers just out of our grasp.

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WHO'S WHO

When asked about the State Department instructions that authorized Ambassador **April Glaspie** to give **Saddam Hussein** a wink as he prepared to invade Kuwait last July, **James Baker** made clear he wanted the buck to stop somewhere else: "What you want me to say is that instructions were sent specifically by me or on my specific orders. There are probably 312,000 or so cables that go out under my name." Of course, insiders know that 311,000 of those cables are concerned with trivial housekeeping details, such as when some minor-league bureaucrat is going to arrive in Lagos. By long-standing custom, they are all signed with the secretary of state's name, even though he may never see them. The remainder, like the ones instructing Glaspie, are concerned with policy, and they are not only signed with Baker's name but are cleared with him or his top aides. If, as Glaspie now seems to maintain, such instructions were never sent, observers wonder why Baker felt he had to deny responsibility for them. . . .

We should have included **Brent Scowcroft**'s name in last month's list of administration figures whose careers were enhanced by Desert Storm. Scowcroft and **Dick Cheney** were consistently more hawkish about war in the Gulf than James Baker and thus more finely attuned to the biggest hawk of all, **George Bush**. Scowcroft is close to both Cheney and General **Colin Powell**. One insider confided to **Andrew Rosenthal** of *The New York Times*, "He can play Cheney and Powell off against Baker, which gives him a new boldness." . . .

White House aides are bracing for a power struggle over who will emerge as the president's image king. **Sig Rogich**, the president's assistant for public events, was unhappy over the news that **Dorrance Smith**, a Bush family friend and creator of ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley," would be joining the administration. Smith is expected to be the gatekeeper of network appearances for senior aides, a job that **Marlin Fitzwater** largely controlled and Rogich wanted. Smith's arrival also seems to further erode the modest power of **David Demarest**, the White House communications director . . . .

Vice President **Dan Quayle**'s deputy chief of staff, **Spencer Abraham,** replaces **Ed Rollins** as co-chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee. Rollins angered **John Sununu** by advising GOP lawmakers to disassociate themselves from George Bush's reversal on tax policy. Abraham's successor: **Al Hubbard**, Quayle's counsel from Indiana and former fundraiser for **Pierre DuPont**'s unsuccessful 1988 GOP bid. . . .

Ronald Kaufman has succeeded **Ed Rogers** as Sununu's chief political aide. Some say Rogers walked the gangplank to fend off criticism of his boss, while others suggest that Bush loyalists were upset because Rogers seemed more committed to Sununu than to the president. It certainly didn't help that Rogers had irritated the president by bad-mouthing **Rich Bond**, a friend of Bush's, when Bond was up for chairman of the Republican National Committee. Kaufman, Who's Who fans will recall, was the Bush campaigner who staged the Boston Harbor and Massachusetts police embarrassments to Michael Dukakis in 1988. . . .

While congressional Democrats search for an issue to awaken their moribund party, Republicans have been fighting tooth and nail over who will replace Rep. **Robert Michel** as head of the minority party. **Newt Gingrich**, the Republican whip, has engaged in trench warfare with hopeful Rep. **Vin Weber**. Other would-be leaders who believe Michel may retire in 1992 include Reps. **Jerry Lewis**, **Duncan Hunter**, and **Henry Hyde**. . . .

Two people who will not be pleased by *Opening Arguments*, a book by a former lawyer in the Iran-contra special prosecution office, are **Elliott Abrams** and **Robert "Bud" McFarlane**. The author, **Jeffrey Toobin**, thinks Abrams should have been indicted and that McFarlane, who some deem the guiltiest of the guilty, should not have been permitted to escape with a plea bargain and no jail time. . . .

Conservative Sovietologists were thrilled that **Condoleezza Rice**, the president's assistant for Soviet affairs and one of the most liberal policy voices in the administration, returned to Stanford University. But they were less than thrilled by the decision of Brent Scowcroft to replace her with Brookings moderate **Ed Hewett**. The anti-Gorbachev crowd suspects that James Baker had a hand in the Hewett appointment— part of his continuing quest to undermine Scowcroft's deputy, **Robert Gates**. . . .

Washington's premier plum, the Commerce undersecretary for travel and tourism, has gone to **John Keller**, the former director of presidential advance, one of the most grueling jobs around. Apparently Bush felt Keller deserved a paid vacation. Meanwhile, the White House continues to lose top aides to the greener pastures of the private sector. The three top deputies in the legislative affairs office—**Robert Portman**, **Boyd Hollingsworth**, and **Nick Calio**—have moved on to better paying jobs, although some speculate that their departures were influenced less by money than by the fact that their prospects at the White House weren't bright. . . .

Ins—*Commerce*: Deputy Secretary—**R. Anthony Schnabel**, Undersecretary for Travel and Tourism—**John Keller**. *Housing and Urban Development*: Assistant Secretary for Administration—**James E. Tarro**, Assistant Secretary for Housing—**Arthur J. Hill**. *White House*: Assistant to the President for Public Affairs—**Dorrance C. Smith**, Chief Speechwriter—**Tony Snow**, Political Director—**Ronald Kaufman**, Director of the Office of Political Affairs—**David Carney**. *Agencies and Commissions*: Governor, Federal Reserve Board—**Lawrence B. Lindsey**.

Outs—*Housing and Urban Development*: Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Relations—**Timothy L. Coyle**. *Treasury*: Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs—**J. Roger Bolton**. *White House*: National Security Advisor to the Vice President—**Carnes Lord,** Chief Speechwriter—**Chriss Winston**, Political Director—**Ed Rogers**. *Agencies and Commissions*: Governor, Federal Reserve Board—**Martha R. Seger**.

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On the Home Front: All Glory, No Guts

For most of America, freeing Kuwait was just another free ride

by James Fallows

During the six weeks of combat in the Persian Gulf, one of the local TV news stations in Washington ran a promotional clip with a wartime theme. It showed its broadcasters in pensive poses, had a flag flapping in the background, and then ran its slogan: "We'll get through this together."

It was done nicely enough, and was the sort of thing that must have been common during World War II. The tone it evoked was of loyal citizens bundling bandages on the home front while waiting for the troops to return. Watching it, I realized that I had never seen such an announcement, with its emphasis on everyone helping each other through a shared and difficult experience, during the Vietnam war.

The only problem with the ad was that it was a lie. Half a million soldiers were getting through something difficult and dangerous in the desert. Their families were disrupted, worried, and sometimes grieved. But the country as a whole was not "getting through" anything in particular. Indeed, the ability to feel, in a self-dramatizing "get through this together" way, like a country at war, without exposing anyone except the soldiers and their families to the inconveniences or rigors of real war, points to one of the strangest twists of our recent politics.

While the fighting was under way, there was no shortage of stoic imagery suggesting, as did the TV ad, that everyone was pulling together to get the job done. A *Washington Post* travel writer, without the slightest hint of irony, said in a column that he would do his part by "hopscotching down the South American continent" on a U.S.-owned airline. "To stay home, in my opinion, is to bow to Saddam Hussein's threats," he explained. "I don't plan to yield to the Iraqi leader's intimidation, but of course that is a personal decision." Not everyone could be expected to be quite so brave. But

James Fallows is the Washington editor of The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly. *This piece is an expansion of a commentary the author did for National Public Radio.*

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many were! A spokesman for the Vail ski resort in Colorado said that, despite the dangers of travel, "People are still coming, and they are coming strong. We feel very, very fortunate."

My point about wartime sacrifice is not the familiar "class war" theme about who is in the army and who is on the slopes. Rather it concerns the bizarre struck-by-lightning nature of "getting through" this war: If you or your loved ones were not in Saudi Arabia, you were not involved at all.

Duty free

The 500,000 soldiers in the Gulf made up one-fifth of one percent of the American public. If we assume, generously, that each of them had 100 immediate relatives or friends, and further assume, unrealistically, that none of those groups of 100 overlapped (as they actually did, since military families, like teachers' or steelworkers' families, tend to know each other), it would still mean that only 20 percent of the people in the country were touched by the war in even a secondhand way. The other 80 percent were "getting through" an experience that did not affect them except as something to watch on TV. When the war was over, many Americans felt, "We won." The U.S. military certainly won; most of the rest of us won only in the way that New York Giant fans "won" the last Super Bowl.

It is inevitable that a minority will bear the direct cost of any war. The difference is that in this case the government did not ask *anything* of people who did not happen to be in uniform or in the reserves when the war began. James Baker and Nicholas Brady went to the Germans and Japanese, asking them to put up more money; George Bush never made the same request of us. American soldiers fought among burning oil fields, in part to keep Saddam Hussein from exerting a stranglehold over the world's oil supply. Neither Bush nor anyone else in his administration seriously urged that we conserve gasoline, pay more for the gas we use, or alter our "way of life" to any degree so as to make ourselves less vulnerable to the next dictator in the Middle East.

Gasoline prices began falling almost as soon as the air war began, and by the time the war was over they were lower than they'd been before Iraq invaded Kuwait. There will never be a more propitious moment to apply higher gasoline taxes: The price was going down anyway, and American soldiers were risking their lives while we drove on. It would have been the simplest act of leadership for Bush to say: *We've learned in the past few months that $1.60 gas won't kill us. Let's voluntarily keep the price there, for our own purposes, rather than letting some future Saddam Hussein drive it up when it's convenient for him—and we'll use the money to pay our soldiers, give ourselves an incentive to conserve, and help American industry develop more efficient technology. We're asking our men and women in uniform to risk their lives. The rest of us can risk a couple of dollars per week.* Instead, as retail prices fell back toward $1.10, the press and administration heralded this as proof that America had really won the war. When Bush finally committed troops to ground combat, he asked, soberly, that Americans give a prayer for all the soldiers in harm's way. It was moving—and remarkable, for it was the only thing he ever asked us to do.

The explanation for this approach could be that Bush had come to see himself as a *commander*, whose goal first and last was to win a war, rather than as a national leader in the broadest sense. From the commander's perspective, any step that reduces domestic sacrifice or confines hardship to a specific group is useful, since it keeps complaints to a minimum and lets him get on with his work. The great wartime leaders—Churchill, FDR—emerged during struggles in which their nation's future really was on the line, and they looked for ways to link, rather than separate, the sacrifices the army and the public were making. The soldiers did the fighting, but the civilians collected tin cans and newspapers, ran local civil defense and draft boards, and endured a wide variety of price controls and rationing of everything from groceries to gasoline. During both world wars, the Korean war, and even, belatedly, Vietnam, federal taxes went up explicitly to offset the war's cost. By contrast, in America's "splendid little wars," against first Mexico and then Spain, presidents Polk and McKinley behaved more like commanders, letting the army do its job without imposing on anyone else.

Bush may simply have decided that the Polk-McKinley model was right for the Gulf war. But something else was involved: a shift in political culture that George Bush both reflected and pandered to.

The critic Philip Rahv wrote his famous essay, "Paleface and Redskin," to argue that literary culture in America was divided into two great camps. On one side were the Palefaces, led by Henry James, who wanted things orderly and refined. On the other side were the Redskins, from Walt Whitman to Norman Mailer or, now, Tom Wolfe, who wanted to change the rules and reinvent tradition. The tension between the two, Rahv said, gave American literature its distinctive shape.

There is a comparable deep tension in American political culture, which could be called Miller Time versus Grindstone Time. Miller Time implies the idea of taking it easy, striking it rich, figuring out an angle that will let you sit back while others do the work.

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This is the only country whose founding document talks about the "pursuit of happiness," and where a major politician, Huey Long, could run for office on the slogan "Every Man a King." The electric golf cart, the "golden parachute" employment deal, the casual sayings like "Take it easy" and "Don't work too hard," the Miller Time ads themselves—these all reflect a sensibility that is not so obvious in, say, Germany or Japan. Gerald Ford lived out this part of the American dream when he went straight from the White House to Vail and Palm Springs. The Miller Time ideal is also built into our economic theory, which says that the individual's unending pursuit of "welfare"—more money, more leisure, more of the fruits of work with less of the pain—is the force that makes societies go.

Presidential retreat

But everyone knows that this is not the whole story, of individual motivation or of American life. The American political and economic system, which is supposed to release individuals from needless limitations, cannot work properly unless individuals put limits on themselves or agree collectively to limits. Otherwise we kill off all the passenger pigeons, no one pays his taxes, everyone bribes the police. Most parents are willing to save or sacrifice for their children's education, in part because it's economically rational but also because fulfilling this duty makes them feel satisfied and proud. The whole idea of duty is the antithesis of Miller Time, but duty has done at least as much as leisure to form America's view of itself. The Pilgrims shivering in the wilderness, the immigrants stitching in their tenements, Thomas Edison trying thousands of materials before finding the one that would work as a filament in a light bulb—these, even more than Gerald Ford, shape the idea of American values. Most people view hard work not as an evil but as something they take satisfaction from having completed or endured. Even the Miller Time ads play to the idea that leisure is more enjoyable if it has been earned: "You've just finished repairing a crack in a nuclear power station. *Now* it's Miller Time."

The satisfactions of working hard, as well as playing hard, are still part of American behavior. We see this in athletes preparing for championships, political workers during a campaign, even the exercise boom that has persuaded many people that they must punish themselves to be fit. Mormon parents still send their children on two-year missions overseas; teenaged boys still practice lay-ups for hours, thinking that if they work hard enough, the NBA awaits; volunteers still sign up for the Marines precisely because they've heard it's tough. But over the past decade, the idea of waiting, enduring, taking pride from time at the grindstone has almost completely vanished from our public, political life.

This change coincided with the rise of Ronald Reagan, which is a cultural rather than a partisan comment. The sunniness of Reagan's character and his relaxed working habits personified the content of many of his policies, which was that we would do better if we were not so hard on ourselves. By contrast, Jimmy Carter in 1980, Walter Mondale in 1984, and Michael Dukakis in 1988 seemed to express a hopeless, eat-your-spinach view of the future. When they were humiliated, they took the very ideas of "sacrifice" and "responsibility" out of political respectability too.

The result has been a structure of politics based on something everyone knows is impossible in his personal life: the promise of permanent Miller Time. Taxes won't go up, middle-class benefits won't go down, but America will still enjoy its mighty place in the world. Any subject that would involve middle-class sacrifice, from a means test for entitlements to a national service plan, is politically taboo. In his State of the Union address, delivered while thousands of Americans were in combat and nearly a dozen were held as POWs in Baghdad, Bush said that America must keep doing the "hard work of freedom." At that point, Bush could have asked for almost anything. If he had merely suggested, as a sign of commitment more tangible than yellow ribbons, that Americans buy low-interest war bonds to support our troops, millions of Americans would have responded. Your brothers and sisters are risking their lives, he could have said; surely you can lend your government some money for three points below prime. (Bush could have asked families who could afford it to buy $1,000 or even $5,000 bonds, and everyone else to do what he or she could. At $100 per American, the bonds would bring in $25 billion.) But Bush did not ask for anything. Not bonds, not taxes, not that we organize to take care of children whom two-soldier families had left behind, not that we donate to the refugee groups that were sure to face new demands in the Middle East, not that we do anything but watch and feel proud. Every specific proposal in his speech was either a new government benefit or a new tax break.

If the concepts of paying our way, doing our part, and earning our rewards had completely disappeared from American culture, we could forget about restoring them to our public life. But, as the volunteer soldiers themselves demonstrate, these ingredients are still part of the American makeup. They await a leader who can figure out how to bring them back into the public realm.

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Sand Trap

U.S. diplomacy did work: It got us into war

by James Bennet

Historians will no doubt debate for decades the what ifs of the fierce war of signals leading up to January 16, and then again to February 23: What if George Bush and Saddam Hussein hadn't publicly demonized each other from the beginning of the crisis? What if the coalition had given the Soviet peace initiative some time to develop? Perhaps Saddam is such a maniac that he would never have complied peacefully with the United Nations resolutions. One thing is certain: Although we can make some educated guesses, we'll never really know the answers, because the Bush administration never tried to find them out.

Then again, why should anyone care? After the breathtaking success of the American armed forces, trying to examine the missed opportunities to resolve the crisis bloodlessly seems not only futile but slightly nuts, like trying to Monday-morning-quarterback a game of hockey. But Saddam Hussein isn't the only ruler in the world who tortures his people and covets his neighbor; even some of our coalition allies fit that description. And he's certainly not the only one who collects unconventional weapons. It would be inhumane and ultimately self-defeating to try to maintain the new world order by spending billions of dollars, risking hundreds of thousands of troops, and killing tens of thousands of people to rein in every threatening dictator who comes along. To have alternatives to military action available down the road, it would seem useful to try to extract some lessons from the what ifs of the brief, undiplomatic diplomatic history of the Gulf crisis. Contrary to so much that has been written on the crisis, the Gulf war was not "inevitable." The Bush administration merely made it look that way by foreclosing other options besides using force to execute the UN resolutions.

James Bennet is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Research assistance was provided by Elliott Beard and Deborah Yavelak Sieff.*

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There is a strong *prima facie* case that both our multilateral diplomacy with our allies and our bilateral diplomacy with Iraq, rather than serving to develop alternatives to war, were merely arms of our military strategy. The contrast between the two tracks of diplomacy alone supports this point: The same administration that skillfully built and manipulated a coalition of antagonistic nations repeatedly bungled its efforts to peacefully reverse the Iraqi invasion. The best example of a missed or ignored opening was the hostage release, which somehow became a minor footnote in the crisis. To uncover some roots of that case, it's helpful to first reexamine the infamous kickoff of the conflict.

Hussein asylum

As we go to press, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie has just offered the first glimpse of the administration's long-awaited version of the prehistory of the crisis. According to her, the gentle message ("We have many Americans who would like to see the price [of oil] go above $25 because they come from oil-producing states") revealed by the transcript had a tougher twin: Glaspie says she told Saddam "several times that we would not countenance violence, or in fact threat or intimidation."

That's a strong message, but did Glaspie actually deliver it? On a common-sense level, it doesn't add up that James Baker and his aides have repeatedly distanced themselves from Glaspie, rather than dismissively asserting right away, as she does at last, that there were "many inaccuracies in the so-called transcript." More important, Glaspie's own testimony undercuts the notion that she protested so much: She says there was no difference between what she told Saddam privately and what the administration was saying publicly—and what the administration was saying publicly made it sound like we would countenance a whole lot. The one exception came in mid-July, when Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney overstepped and told reporters that the U.S. would defend Kuwait were it attacked; the White House quickly informed him that it and State would handle comments on Iraq. The word from State, as Margaret Tutwiler put it, was that "there are no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait." Two days before Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait City, John Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, in testimony before Congress, delivered Glaspie's gentler message —that, in her notorious words, "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts."

Glaspie's passivity no doubt stemmed partly from her awareness that Iraq did have legitimate grievances against Kuwait. The northern border of Kuwait has never been officially ratified by either government. Kuwait agreed at three different OPEC meetings to decrease its production in order to raise the price of oil to $18 per barrel, but it went back on its promises every time, damaging the Iraqi economy. Adding injury to injury, Kuwait had drawn some of this excess oil from deposits lying beneath both nations, across the disputed boundary. Of course, these grievances didn't justify the invasion, but they do help explain the patience with which Glaspie listened to Saddam's ranting—as does a revealing statement she made to *The New York Times*: "I didn't think—and nobody else did—that the Iraqis were going to take all of Kuwait."

Even if Glaspie did try to get the tougher message across, it's hard to believe Saddam would have taken her seriously. After all, the U.S. had countenanced Iraqi violence, threat, and intimidation for years. Indeed, we supported all three during the war on Iran. After the war ended, it was no longer the American intent to back Saddam's adventurism, but it was our policy to play nice with him. This internally dissonant approach survived Saddam's 1988 gassing of the Kurds (although within two weeks of the start of the Kuwait crisis, Bush was stridently proclaiming that act, as well as the invasion of Iran, to be evidence of Saddam's inhumanity). Even after the Iraqi leader threatened to destroy half of Israel with chemical weapons, Kelly assured Congress last April that "we believe that there is still a potentiality for positive alterations in Iraqi behavior."

"Napoleon began the war with Russia because he could not resist going to Dresden, could not help his head being turned by the homage he received, could not help donning Polish uniform and yielding to the stimulating influence of a June morning," Leo Tolstoy wrote in *War and Peace*. "Alexander refused all negotiations because he felt himself personally insulted." Perhaps all the forbearance shown Iraq through the years helps account for the remarkable fury with which George Bush reacted to the invasion of Kuwait. It almost surely accounts for Saddam's gross miscalculation of the American response. After all, he had a longstanding relationship with the American geopoliticians, and he probably believed that State had consented to his proposal. Now, all of a sudden, Bush was screaming "rape." What happened to all the good times?

The rhetoric war escalated quickly after the invasion of Kuwait. Bush went from calling Saddam a liar on the third day of the crisis to comparing him to Hitler on the sixth day, until by August 20 he was calling Saddam "a person whose values—who has no values—when it comes to respecting international law, a man of evil standing against human life itself." Needless to say, Saddam's rhetoric was even more colorful. Bush's accusations may all have been fair, but the effect of his snowballing words was to trap Saddam in Kuwait. As Roger Fisher, director of Har-

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vard's Negotiation Project, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December, "Much has been said that could convince Iraq that withdrawal from Kuwait would only make it worse off."

It wasn't until December that Baker announced that Saddam would not be attacked if he withdrew from Kuwait. Even given that assurance, according to Fisher's analysis, Saddam could still expect sanctions to continue until he paid reparations and possibly was tried for war crimes; he could expect to receive nothing from the Kuwaitis; he would be humiliated before the world; and he would probably be tossed out at home. If he stayed in Kuwait, the picture was marginally brighter: He still had some bargaining chips, some hope of outlasting sanctions, some hope of permanent gain, and some international respect for his power. He could always try to cut a deal down the road if the outlook turned truly bleak.

In other words, while our stated policy was to get Saddam out of Kuwait by peaceful means if possible, all the signals the administration was sending had the effect of boxing him in until our military was prepared to drive him out by force—and in the process destroy his military infrastructure, which was not a UN objective. All through the past several months, the administration greeted the possibility of a negotiated settlement and a peaceful withdrawal (the "nightmare scenario") with fear, not relief. The administration "deliberately decided that there wasn't going to be a diplomatic role," says James Akins, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia. No moment in the crisis better illustrates this point than the December hostage release.

Child's play

On November 30, Bush, in an effort to head off a special session favored by congressmen worried about the rush to war, declared that he wanted "to go the extra mile for peace" and "exhaust all means for achieving a political and diplomatic solution." He made a surprise offer to Iraq: He said he would invite Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to meet with him in Washington during the week of December 10, and he offered to send Baker to meet with Saddam "at a mutually convenient time between December 15th and January 15th of next year." He emphasized that he would not compromise on the familiar three objectives: "Iraq's complete withdrawal from Kuwait, restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, and freedom for all the hostages." After downplaying the plight of the hostages in the early days of the crisis, Bush had begun speaking about them regularly during the midterm elections. He again emphasized their mistreatment when he issued the invitation.

"Iraqi officials reacted with surprise and enthusiasm tonight to President Bush's offer to hold direct talks," reported *The New York Times*. One official called it "the first good news from Washington in months." A week later, after accepting the invitation, Saddam complied fully with Bush's third demand, announcing that he would release all the hostages "to respond to these good, positive changes." In traditional Arab fashion, he was making a reciprocal gesture of good will. On NBC's "Meet the Press," Iraq's ambassador to the UN said that in calling for talks, "The president had taken a step in the right direction, and we responded positively."

One worried Saudi official told *The New York Times*, "This means the war is over. It's going to be impossible to keep the pressure up if Saddam releases the hostages."

This was perhaps the most hopeful moment between the invasion and January 16. The *Los Angeles Times* declared that Saddam's "announcement signaled the possibility of the first real movement in the four-month-old Persian Gulf crisis." One "worried Saudi official who deals in foreign affairs" told *The New York Times*, "This means the war is over. It's going to be impossible to keep the pressure up if Saddam releases the hostages."

But things quickly fell apart. Saddam invited Baker to come to Baghdad on January 12, within the time frame laid down by Bush. But the U.S. administration declared that date unacceptable, because it was too close to the UN deadline. Saddam Hussein would have to come up with a date between December 20 and January 3. "I wish now," said Bush, "that I had been a little more explicit in my first announcement on what I meant by mutually convenient dates." In Baghdad, this was regarded as a humiliating bait-and-switch, and the Iraqi government resisted setting a new date. "I was in the Mideast at the time," says Akins, and Bush's reneging on the initial dates "was regarded as most peculiar. . . . They couldn't understand Bush." Fisher expresses the Iraqi reaction more simply: "They thought they were being jerked around."

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According to *The New York Times*, "Senior Iraqi officials characterized the dispute as one involving Iraq's dignity, saying they will not allow the administration to dictate the date on which the Iraqi president is available to receive Mr. Baker." The two governments launched into a long period of negotiating over when to negotiate (or, more accurately, not negotiating over when not to negotiate); the process, rather than the underlying objectives, became the issue. Rep. Pat Schroeder observed during this bewildering period that the United States appeared to be willing to go to war over a difference of nine days: "Talk is very cheap. War is costly. I feel as though I'm listening to an argument between three-year-olds."

But in times of crisis, especially in matters of foreign policy, the executive branch has enormous powers of spin control. High-level officials quickly shifted the focus from the president's moving the goalposts to the intransigence of the Iraqis in refusing to accommodate him. Indeed, the fact that Bush changed the terms seems to have dropped out of the national consciousness. In its rich history of the crisis, "The Road to War," *Newsweek* reported only that Saddam "sent word that he wouldn't receive Baker in Baghdad until the very eve of the UN deadline. It seemed clear to the administration that he was trying to stall, not to talk." Unmentioned is the fact that Saddam had picked a date that Bush had first offered.

Instead of capitalizing on the opportunity presented by the hostage release, the administration vigorously downplayed its significance. "I don't believe Saddam Hussein deserves any credit for stopping a practice that obviously is abhorrent to the civilized world," said Cheney. To achieve peace in the region, he declared, Saddam would have to "go back to Baghdad with his tail between his legs." Bush said Iraq would get no reward for releasing the hostages. "Hell no. Not one thing. You don't reward a kidnapper. You don't reward somebody who has done something that he shouldn't have done in the first place." Deprived of the hostages' plight as a rallying cry, the administration began underscoring Iraq's nuclear threat. It was also in early December that Bush, Baker, and Cheney all began saying publicly that sanctions wouldn't accomplish the UN objectives, torpedoing the possibility of an economic solution at the same time they were downplaying the hopes for a diplomatic one. Soon, there would be only one option left.

Bushwhacked

The issue needn't have been one of "rewards" (or "conditions"). Instead, Bush could just as easily have declared that the hostage release suggested Saddam Hussein was coming to his senses, that perhaps he wanted to be readmitted to the world community; the coalition would be firm in insisting on its own priorities, but it would be willing to listen to Saddam's grievances. Despite its poisonous rhetoric, the Iraqi government continued to signal that it wanted "deep dialogue" with the United States. On December 17, Iraq released this statement: "We want peace. We want dialogue for peace. We respect legitimacy, and we want international law to be applied to the issues of our nation, but we refuse capitulation." This should have been an American negotiator's dream. The Iraqis appeared to be willing to accept an objective framework—"international law"—to resolve the crisis, a framework that, as Bush repeatedly proclaimed, powerfully favored our position. But we never explored the possibility.

To be consistent within that framework, the U.S. might have had to agree to future talks to encourage Israeli compliance with UN resolutions. Not only were Bush and Baker both on the record in support of such a conference, but it could only have helped American foreign policy in the long term, since the more the U.S. is perceived as being selective in its efforts to apply international law, the harder it will be for it to avail itself of international law's moral sanction in dealing with rogue states like Iraq. Again, maybe the Iraqis were not sincerely interested in a reasonable diplomatic solution. The point here is simply that we never put the possibility that they were to the test.

"I take negotiations as a sign of confidence in our own ideas," says Fisher. "[They mean], 'I'm right. My ideas are powerful.'" But the Bush administration publicly connected "negotiation" with appeasement, and wouldn't even use the word to describe its contacts with the Iraqi government. Bush refused to show any respect to his opponent whatsoever: "I don't care about face. He doesn't need any face. He needs to get out of Kuwait. . . ." That position was surprising, since it was so inconsistent with the traditional American approach to even more murderous dictators. Why did we limit ourselves to the military option against Iraq?

Probably because, with the Cold War over, we could afford to. The administration believed that, unlike the alternatives of sanctions and diplomacy, the military option guaranteed a decisive outcome, at least in the short term. And it has succeeded, at an enormous cost in men and machines. Those costs are too high for us to use the military to resolve every such crisis in Bush's brave new world order. Of course, the costs of not doing anything are just as high. From a public policy standpoint, the tragedy of the Kuwait crisis is that we don't know if air-tight sanctions, combined with good faith diplomacy, would have peacefully enforced international law.

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AGSCAM: The New World Money Order

The Department of Agriculture's long, dirty dance with a dictator

by Mark Feldstein

As the Bush administration toasted its military victory over a ruthless third world dictator, it was harder than ever to remember how the United States helped build Iraq up before bombing it down—including one prewar foreign policy fiasco that transpired not in the Gulf, but in the quiet hallways of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

By now, other aspects of the story are familiar. Desperate to stop Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, the U.S. reestablished diplomatic ties with Iraq in 1984 and began supplying Saddam Hussein with what would total more than $1.5 billion worth of helicopters, computers, electronic equipment, and other militarily vital technology. Yet, of all the American aid to Iraq, the largest—and perhaps most important—has been the least noticed: some $5 billion in U.S.-backed agricultural loans.

At its inception in the early eighties, the loan guarantee program seemed harmless, a kind of latter-day Food For Peace program that put food on third world tables while opening up a new and profitable market for the powerful American agricultural constituency. After Iraq was ushered into the program in 1983, more than 100 American companies—from Pillsbury to Pepsi-Cola, Cargill to Comet Rice—eagerly signed on. But as USDA administrators stood back, took notes, and did nothing, Food For Peace turned into Food For War.

During the final years of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam's trade ministers began to press American businesses involved in the program to throw in free trucks, cranes, cash, and military supplies in exchange for multimillion dollar contracts for rice, grains, and other products. To some American corporations, that illegal request proved too profitable to resist—

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and besides, it was virtually risk-free, thanks to the USDA's faith in its agribusiness constituency. While the U.S. government guaranteed the loans and looked away, a group of renegade American companies illegally supplied Saddam's government with millions of dollars in cash and militarily useful industrial hardware.

In 1990, Iraq defaulted on its USDA loans, leaving taxpayers liable for a $2 billion bill. If that's an unwelcome surprise to the public, internal agency documents show that USDA's faith was anything but blind. As early as 1987, USDA began receiving warnings that Iraq was asking American businesses to illegally ship goods purchased with U.S. government-guaranteed loans—warnings that, in deference to State Department pressure and a desire to push American exports, USDA virtually ignored. In fact, despite four years of allegations and criticism by the General Accounting Office (GAO), Iraq was eligible for the guaranteed loans until it rolled into Kuwait.

The USDA loan fiasco did not help the Iraqis win the Gulf war. But it should nevertheless provide the United States with a powerful lesson. In the hands of dictators and dishonest businessmen, USDA's laissez-faire policy was—and is—a recipe for disaster.

Guaranteed abuse

While much of the Iraq program blackmail transpired during the Bush administration, the USDA debacle was enabled by a classic Reagan-era concept: unregulated capitalism cobbled onto a kind of welfare for the wealthy—the very philosophy that brought us the HUD and S&L crises.

In this case, the operative acronym is GSM: USDA's General Sales Manager credits. Under the program, cash-poor nations from Brazil to Bangladesh obtain loans from private banks to purchase American goods. But the program is not, USDA officials emphasize, humanitarian aid. It's self-help for the U.S. trade deficit. By negotiating the sale of billions of dollars of wheat, rice, milk, wood products, and cotton, USDA can dramatically increase its exports while funnelling money to the American farm belt. And there's no question that this aspect of the program has worked: More than $32 billion of America's overseas agricultural sales have been made with the help of USDA loan guarantees since the program began in 1980.

USDA's explicit goal has never been to regulate agricultural sales but to "facilitate" them. Here's how it works: First, after carefully analyzing the credit risk of, say, the desert nation of Narnia, USDA announces $1 billion worth of credit guarantees available for agricultural exports to the country. St. Louis-based Gringo Grain, Inc., uses that guarantee to negotiate a $20 million shipment of grain with the Narnian Import Ministry, and then brings in Paul's Bank in Des Moines, Iowa, to finance the deal. Paul's Bank pays Gringo Grain and sets up a long- or medium-term loan agreement with Narnia. USDA promises to pay Paul's Bank if Narnia fails to repay. Under normal market conditions, the program should run smoothly. But in Iraq's case, market conditions never entered the picture.

Iraq was escorted into the agricultural loan program in 1983 as part of the State Department's campaign to reestablish diplomatic ties with Saddam's regime. While war-torn Iraq was not an ideal credit risk, State thought that good relations with Saddam were essential to counter the threat Khomeini's fundamentalism posed to regional stability. Loan guarantees served as a diplomatic foot in Baghdad's door. The guarantees were a "political instrument," recalls Richard Murphy, then assistant secretary of state, ". . . part of our effort in foreign policy to see if we could develop a set of relations with Iraq which would help moderate that country." USDA incentives worked like a charm: A year later, the United States established normal diplomatic ties with Iraq. Says one USDA official, "The State Department gave [the program] a great deal of credit for helping improve relations between Iraq and the United States."

There was, of course, the unpleasant matter of Iraq's brutal human rights record—torturing political opponents, sponsoring acts of terrorism, and eventually unleashing chemical weapons on women and children. But such concerns did not prevail. Over the next six years, the guarantees remained an integral part of American foreign policy towards Iraq. As the U.S. tilted toward Saddam in his war with Iran, culminating with the tanker reflagging effort of 1987, U.S.-backed loans grew accordingly, reaching over $2 billion in guarantees in 1988 and 1989—making Iraq one of the largest recipients of USDA guarantees. It was not until August 1990 that Iraq was excluded from the program—that is, until it marched into Kuwait, "facilitated" by hardware it had obtained through USDA's largess.

Spuds 'n Scuds

It's disturbing enough that the $5 billion in loan guarantees allowed Iraq to stockpile food and other essential agricultural commodities, helping it shift capital to artillery and tanks and eventually resist the United Nations embargo. But some of the shipments weren't agricultural at all. A recent GAO audit reports that Iraq demanded tires, air-conditioning equipment, spare parts, and cash from companies ap-

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plying for a contract under the credit program. In one cable from the Iraqi government to several U.S. wood export companies, the Iraqis demanded trucks and trailers "free of charges—repeat—free of charges," adding that "our future business with your company will depend mainly on the range of your cooperation." Just in case the American companies missed the point, the cable stated that "any negative reply" would cause the U.S. firm to be "blacklisted."

Several American agricultural exporters—who were promised anonymity—privately admitted to CNN that they had routinely supplied Iraq with cash and hardware in order to make a deal. "It's standard practice in the industry," said one knowledgeable participant. "It's the price of doing business in Iraq." According to an unpublished USDA inspector general's report, cooperating companies often received privileged information about their competitors' bids, giving them an illegal edge in the marketplace.

As one USDA administrator shrugs, "If someone wants to commit fraud, [he's] going to do it." And, as the Iraqi case suggests, he's going to get away with it for years.

U.S. businessmen even came up with a name—"after-sales services"—for money they quietly sent to Baghdad to get a contract. Congressional investigators call it a kickback. According to program participants, the amount of those after-sales services was often spelled out in advance—up to 10 percent of each contract. Says one businessman, "Either you do it, or you don't get the deal."

For some American companies, the answer, obviously, was do it. Federal prosecutors recently found that, under the USDA program, Iraq secretly received more than $1.5 million in non-agricultural products and cash payments from five North Carolina tobacco companies. (It was only after these allegations came to light that tobacco was removed from USDA's list of acceptable commodities.) Yet those companies, snagged in a separate tobacco investigation, may be only the beginning. The unpublished inspector general's report charges that three of eight companies examined in a random inspection illegally provided more than $380,000 in goods and payments to Iraq. (There are 140 other companies that did business with Iraq.)

While the government report did not identify the three exporters, congressional sources did. The Louis Dreyfus Corp., a giant grain-trading company, allegedly supplied Iraq with more than $33,000 in laboratory equipment and fumigants. The American subsidiary of Japan's Mitsui & Co. delivered $250,000 in unspecified chemicals, spare parts, and copy and fax machines, and the Los Angeles-based Comet Rice, Inc., supplied more than $97,000 in illegal after-sales services. According to the government report, Iraq requested spare parts that the company feared "were for military use."

The Customs Service is currently investigating possible arms sales under the program; it won't reveal which American companies complied with the war-bound Iraqis' wish list. But some agricultural loans may have wound up helping Iraq fire its erratic Scud missiles at U.S. troops and civilians in Israel and Saudi Arabia. According to federal investigators and other sources, Iraq managed to use the U.S. loan program to obtain trucks and cranes. "You don't have a mobile Scud without a truck and a crane," says James Blackwell, a military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The only way to transport Scud missiles around Iraq is by truck. And a crane is necessary to lift the missile up and to reload it." While it's unclear how many of these trucks and cranes Iraq received under the U.S. loan program, some information can be gleaned from one truck order that Iraq placed with a U.S. agricultural company. According to analyst Blackwell, who examined it, Iraq ordered only trucks large enough and powerful enough to carry a Scud.

Although Iraq could have purchased this machinery on the open market in Europe or elsewhere, it would then have had to pay for it. Under the U.S. loan guarantee program, it won't. For on August 2, 1990, Iraq stopped payment on $2 billion of USDA-guaranteed loans, leaving taxpayers liable for the bill.

How could such double-dealing happen with publicly guaranteed funds? GAO and inspector general reports suggest that the answer lies not just with duplicitous Iraqis and agribusiness CEOs, but with the USDA itself, which trusts businesses to regulate themselves as they enter the moral and economic maze of international export.

No investigator ever peers into the crates of most of the 80 or so commodities that qualify for loan guarantees; instead, USDA relies wholly on the ex-

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porters' own records. The obvious flaw in that thinking led GAO to complain in 1988 that there was no "accurate accounting" of billions of dollars in USDA's outstanding loans.

Ironically, the first complaints about abuse in the USDA guarantee program came, not from government auditors, but from high-ranking Iraqi officials, who in early 1986 claimed to have received a blend of American and cheaper Brazilian tobacco when they had paid for—rather, borrowed the money for—all-American tobacco. The Iraqi claim was never verified, but congressional investigators on the case discovered that USDA rarely questioned an exporter's statements about a shipment's contents. As one congressional investigator put it, "For all the Agriculture Department knew, the shipments could have been military equipment."

Of course, as with all loans, the banks that fronted them were also supposed to keep a vigilant eye on how they were spent. In fact, that's what USDA was counting on. Unfortunately, the Department of Justice has just indicted officials from the major money center in the Iraqi guarantee program—the Atlanta branch of Italy's largest bank, Banca Nazionale Del Lavoro (BNL)—charging that the bank was in on Iraq's scam. According to a complaint filed by BNL headquarters in Rome, the Atlanta branch's directors hid about *$750 million* in U.S. guaranteed loans to Iraq in secret "greybook" accounts.

What were those bankers allegedly hiding? Justice won't speculate. Nor will it forward numerous crucial documents to congressional investigators. But the subject heading of one memo from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York offers a chilling clue: "BNL Involvement in Nuclear Triggers of Iraqis."

While the case has yet to go to trial in Atlanta, an internal memo written in February 1990 by General Sales Manager F. Paul Dickerson indicates that USDA long ago started discussing damage control. "In the worst case scenario, investigators would find a direct link to financing Iraqi military expenditures, particularly the Condor missile," he wrote. "Should a direct link be developed between Iraqi government officials or the government itself, [USDA] would face severe criticism for continuing the program."

Condors or no Condors, severe criticism may be in order. Since 1987, GAO has been urging USDA to tighten up its administration of the agricultural loan program by instigating random, on-site verification of goods both domestically and abroad. The USDA's inspector general has chimed in, too, requesting more and better documentation of what, exactly, is in those thousands of U.S. government-facilitated shipments overseas. And in the wake of the tobacco-company convictions and the BNL scandal, some reforms have been made. Yet while the new, improved USDA has asked exporters to provide additional documentary evidence, no physical verification of the shipments' contents has been ordered—even on a spot-check basis. The end result of this reform? "If [the exporters] are willing to falsify the paperwork," says GAO investigator N. Scott Einhorn, "they probably won't get caught."

And even if they do, they'll probably get a slap on the wrist and continue profiting from USDA credits. As of mid-February, confirms Kevin Brosch of the USDA's Office of General Counsel, no participant in the loan program has ever been barred for breaking the rules; only one has been suspended. As one USDA administrator shrugs, "If someone wants to commit fraud, [he's] going to do it." And, as the Iraqi case suggests, given the right political climate, he's going to get away with it for years—even when USDA knows what's going on.

Loan wolves

The first alarm over the Iraqi loan program was sounded back in 1987, when American companies complained to USDA about Iraq's illegal requests. But instead of launching an investigation, the department sent a memo to its trusted American exporters telling them not to break the law. It then renewed—and increased—the loan guarantees to Iraq.

Not surprisingly, the shakedowns continued, and by 1988, several exporters were so exasperated by the Iraqi blackmail that they put their complaints in writing to USDA. Officials from one U.S. company even met with the agency's attorneys, turning over written evidence of Iraqi threats.

Meanwhile, concern was mounting in other government agencies. The Export-Import Bank warned in August 1988 that, despite Iraq's oil-rich potential, the country's accumulated war debts—estimated at $90 billion—made it a risky recipient of U.S. largess. In fact, Iraq was already "in arrearage" to the bank itself. Yet the next month, USDA provided Iraq with a supplemental $36.5 million in credit guarantees. And as 1989 began, it extended another billion dollars' worth of credit to Iraq.

Given the tobacco scandal, the allegations of blackmail, and the emerging proof of Iraq's inability to repay, why was USDA still so resistant to terminating aid to Iraq? One reason was a concerted campaign by wheat, wood, and rice distributors from Alabama to the Pacific Northwest, who papered USDA with pleas to keep their Iraqi deals alive. After all, as former General Sales Manager Melvin Sims remarks, "[The Department of] Agriculture considered it very much a market development pro-

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gram." Still, as documentation of Iraq's abuses piled up, another advocate of continuing the program may have been equally influential: the State Department.

State officials routinely meet with USDA administrators and representatives of Treasury, Commerce, and other federal agencies to discuss the credit guarantee program in the National Advisory Council, a body that makes non-binding recommendations on which nations will be given credit guarantees. While the minutes of the council's deliberations on the Iraqi loans have not been released—even to GAO auditors—GAO concluded, and Sims confirms, that State was an unwavering supporter of continuing the loan guarantees to Saddam. "I think our government wanted to be good to Saddam Hussein and to help him as quietly as they could," speculates North Carolina Rep. Charlie Rose, who is leading a subcommittee investigation of the Iraqi loans. "They didn't want to directly ship military systems to Iraq. They didn't want to excite Israel. They didn't want to directly offer foreign aid or military sales credit. So they told USDA to be as generous as [it could] with agricultural credits."

It was not until the BNL-Atlanta allegations surfaced in the fall of 1989 that USDA ordered an "administrative review" of the Iraqi program. Yet two months later, USDA's new general sales manager, Paul Dickerson, proposed that Iraq's credits remain at $1 billion for 1990, BNL allegations notwithstanding. When other government officials rebelled, Dickerson reconsidered—but didn't stop the credits altogether. After negotiations in Baghdad, he reduced the guarantees to $500 million, holding the other $500 million in abeyance until the BNL investigation was resolved. A memo Dickerson wrote at the time noted that the decision to continue the loans would receive "strong interagency opposition . . . particularly [from] the Treasury Department." Still, he pointed out, "Iraq is a major market for U.S. agricultural products and our largest market for rice."

Although Dickerson's memo warned of possible "adverse congressional reaction and press coverage"—particularly "domestic political concerns . . . that no HUD or savings and loan type scandal be permitted"—it concluded that stopping those loans would be "considered by the Iraqi Government as unwarranted and an affront to their dignity."

By this time, of course, even some State Department officials were willing to affront Iraq's dignity, calling its human rights record "abysmal." But as Agriculture pushed American products and State pushed against Iran, both seemed oblivious to humanitarian concerns. For instance, while congressional hearings in 1988 had determined that Iraq's government had ordered the use of chemical weapons on the Kurds, USDA apparently had more reliable sources. After a "personal investigation" led by Sims, USDA decided that there was "no concrete evidence" that the poison gas was actually authorized by the government. "I never had anyone tell me that the evidence was conclusive at that time," he recalls.

It was not until 1990 that Iraq's reputation became sufficiently tarnished to raise the issue of canceling the guarantees altogether. By spring, Iraq had used the $500 million allotted to it and come back to USDA for more; Dickerson, citing the ongoing BNL investigation, refused to release the funds. Shortly thereafter, Rep. Charles Schumer introduced an amendment to the 1990 farm bill that would deny the Iraqis any further guarantees. On July 27, it passed—but the very same day, the House effectively gutted its sanctions by giving USDA the power to return Iraq to the program if the ban hurt American farmers.

Six days later, Iraq invaded Kuwait, finally putting an end to the sorry saga of Iraqi agricultural credits—too late to undo the damage. The results: an Iraqi government supplied with military hardware and cash under a U.S. government program, and a $2 billion bill about to come due.

Check imbalances

As years of unnoticed GAO and inspector general reports amply indicate, the press considers USDA an unlikely outpost for international intrigue; cotton, rice, and milk contracts are not the usual stuff of searing foreign policy exposés. Yet in 10 years of existence, USDA's loan guarantees have been quietly transformed from a dull export-enhancement strategy into a critical foreign policy tool—one that has as much to do with backroom diplomacy as with careful estimation of credit risks.

In this perverted "market," in which businesses, banks, and dictators make deals with U.S. government credits, there should be increased public and press demand for government oversight. There isn't. Iraq or no Iraq, tens of thousands of shipments still leave American ports unexamined, guaranteed by public money. It's checkbook diplomacy that we'll inevitably find ourselves paying for again—in our tax bills, certainly, and perhaps even in our next little war.

Just a few weeks after Iraq invaded Kuwait, sources say, some State Department officials suggested extending agricultural credits to Syria, a country notorious for its support of terrorism and its bloody record on human rights. The idea was to encourage Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to join the allied coalition against Iraq. Eventually, cooler heads prevailed. But the irony of it all went almost undetected.

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

HOW DO THEY DEFINE "WASTE OF TIME"?
The Columbus (Ohio) Coalition for the Homeless, which is composed of government, shelter, and social agency staff members, spent a year working on a dictionary that included such definitions as "emergency shelter for families: an emergency shelter which shelters families" and "homelessness: the state or condition of being a homeless person."

FORTUNATELY, THE COLUMBUS COALITION CAN DEFINE IT
The North Carolina Board of Education's latest report on the state's public schools frequently uses "advantagement," a word that is not found in any standard dictionary.

BO KNOWS LOOPHOLES
An advertisement for Nike shoes posted at the Portland airport invites people to "buy a pair of Cross-Trainers and call it 'dinner in Oakland.' Just kidding, of course."

SMITHERS, IS IT JUST ME OR WERE THERE SOME TRIDENT MISSILES OVER THERE YESTERDAY?
A man sought for two murders committed in the course of an armored car holdup was arrested recently at the Electric Boat Division shipyard in Groton, Connecticut, where he had worked for two years on highly classified nuclear submarines.

BUT HE'S WILLING TO DYE FOR HIS COUNTRY
It was recently revealed that a man listed on the payroll of the Argentinian Senate as a secretary is in fact President Carlos Menem's personal hairdresser.

INDIANA ÜBER ALLES
The Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* reports that a local support group for wives, parents, and family members of soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf calls itself Operation Storm Troopers.

ALSO THE AUTHOR OF *BEING AND DRIBBLING*
The notes on contributors in a Temple University Press collection of essays, *Rethinking College Athletics,* state, "Lawrence J. Hatab is associate professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University. His work includes "Language and Mysticism," "Language and Mystery in Heidegger and Wittgenstein," "Laughter in Nietzsche's Thought," *Myth and Philosophy: Retrieving their Contest in Ancient Greece*, and *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence.* He was once thrown out of Madison Square Garden during a National Invitational Tournament for arguing with a referee."

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The Keating 535

Charles Keating did us a favor: He showed us how to clean up American campaigns.

by Andrew Bates

"One of the reasons there is so much support for term limitations is that the American people are increasingly concerned about big-money influence in politics. So we must look beyond the next election to the next generation. And the time has come to put the national interest above the special interest—and to totally eliminate Political Action Committees."

Another Common Cause press release? The annual David Broder campaign reform op-ed? A stump speech by professor Paul Wellstone? No, this call for campaign reform came from President George Bush in his January 29 State of the Union address.

Thanks largely to the exploits of the Keating Five, the idea of campaign finance reform has quietly inched its way in from the fringes, claiming a plank on America's mainstream policy agenda for the first time since Watergate. And that's a damn fine thing. But as President Bush sets out to slay the PAC-men, he's making the same quick-fix mistake that turned Watergate campaign "reforms" into a nursery for folks like Charles Keating.

To understand this, all Bush had to do was take a hard look at the Keating Five scandal, which had nothing to do with PACs but everything to do with campaign finance's more subtle quid pro quo. Recognizing the broader relevance of their clients' actions, defense lawyers cynically turned the Senate Ethics Committee hearings into a sweeping indictment of 535 congressmen. It wasn't that the Keating Five "did nothing wrong" by intervening on behalf of a generous campaign donor; it was that "everybody else does it." Testifying on behalf of embattled colleague Dennis DeConcini, Senator Daniel Inouye admitted, "If [what DeConcini did] is improper, I think all of us at one time or another have done that."

Andrew Bates works for the Political Hotline, a daily political wire service.

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As Jonathan Rowe of the *Christian Science Monitor* has argued, the Keating hearings presented a spectacle "worse than Watergate," since if Watergate "was about a few bad apples, the Keating Five is about the whole barrel." Still, there's been one healthy seed. By now, virtually every editorial page in the country has urged Congress to "get big money out of campaigns." And even though the only one nailed was the one not up for reelection, the Keating Five scandal has provided the impetus for reform that 20 years of Common Cause diatribes about "special interest money perverting the political process" never could.

Of course, it's easy to rant and rave that money is corrupting our political process—the most entrenched and PAC-financed congressmen do so every year. What's more difficult is to translate such apparent good intentions into meaningful reform. What we need aren't quick fixes like spending ceilings or public financing of campaigns. We need a treatment that goes to the root of today's gutter-pitched and skyscraper-priced congressional campaigns. Abolish the PACs, by all means. And then get to work at real reform.

Foley's follies

The best example of the folly of quick-fix reform comes, not surprisingly, from Congress itself, which last year turned a window of opportunity into the Potemkin Village of campaign reform.

Shamed into action by their Keating Five colleagues and prodded by a bipartisan advisory panel whose recommendations provided a reasonable blueprint for compromise, the Senate took the first wobbly step toward change. After years of filibustering or ignoring Democratic proposals, Senate Republicans realized that it would be political suicide not to back some sort of campaign reform. They emerged with a plan banning PACs and sharply restricting the flow of "soft money" generated by the political activities of unions and trade associations. The GOP proposal forced the Democrats' hand, helping produce a credible bipartisan bill that would have eliminated PAC contributions, prohibited the use of the frank for mass mailings during election years, limited out-of-state individual contributions to $250, and established voluntary, state-by-state spending limits.

It was a bill, amazingly, that addressed many of the inequities of the current system. But it didn't reach the president's desk last year. In fact, no campaign reform bill did, thanks, not to some PAC-engorged midwestern committee chair, but to Speaker of the House (and campaign reform "advocate") Tom Foley.

Unlike former Speaker Jim Wright, Foley has never been accused of any ethical wrongdoing. And unlike Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, the leading House recipient of PAC contributions ($650,000 during 1989-90), Foley does not loudly proclaim his commitment to reform and then quietly soak the PACs. Yet, despite his pristine image, Foley has become the greatest obstacle to campaign finance reform.

In 1989, after Wright's forced resignation, both Foley and House Minority Leader Robert Michel stated their intentions to make campaign reform a reality, Michel emotionally proclaiming that the stain of the Wright case would remain until the House passed a "dramatic reform of our campaign laws and practices." With staunch leadership, it appeared that this might be one of the House's rare bipartisan efforts, especially after Michel made overtures to the Democrats, saying that he was amenable to a spending limit. But House Democrats, with little scrutiny from the press, got away with a time-honored gimmick: proclaim your unswerving devotion to issue A, then pass a fluff bill that is so far from real reform that it can't help but derail conference negotiations. For, unlike the Senate, the House didn't have the ghost of the Keating Five hovering over it to spur an honest attempt at campaign reform.

In 1990, Foley and Michel deputized Reps. Al Swift and Guy Vander Jagt to lead negotiations on the issue. Under the agreement, if negotiations broke down over the most contentious questions (such as how high any spending limit should be set), Foley and Michel would then take charge themselves. Yet when the inevitable breakdown occurred in June, the leaders met only once. Foley made no attempt to construct a bipartisan bill of the sort that Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell skillfully put together, one that wouldn't automatically provoke a presidential veto. He refused Michel's invitation to meet to negotiate campaign spending limits as one element in a comprehensive package. He also didn't take the issue to the House Democratic Caucus or force Democrats to resolve their internal differences. As one congressional aide suggested, Foley's behavior made the real campaign agenda perfectly clear: "Stall 'til after the 1992 elections."

But, Congress being Congress, stalling had to look like working. So at the last minute, the House did pass a hastily written campaign finance bill (with Foley's approval)—a bill so bad that even moderate Republicans denounced it as a copout. (Iowa Rep. James Leach called it "a sham and a shame.") For proof, look at the "reform" the task force crafting the House legislation came up with.

First of all, Swift and his cohorts decided to limit

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spending in House races—to $550,000 per candidate, twice the current average. But that made some urban Democrats nervous. What if $550,000 proved too little after a tough primary fight? So the task force wrote in an additional $165,000 for those who get less than 67 percent of the primary vote. So much for a spending limit.

Next, they decided to limit a candidate's PAC contributions to 50 percent of that ceiling—$275,000, more than the average candidate now spends per campaign. By 1988 election standards, that provision wouldn't have affected the PAC receipts of three-fourths of the 435 members. Still, Congress didn't want to box itself in. At the last minute, a few more soft money loopholes were scribbled in, including exceptions to permit lobbyists to continue serving on members' fundraising committees and to exempt legal and accounting fees from the spending limit.

The net effect, intended or not, was to take a passable Senate bill, which had garnered the support of moderate Republicans and incorporated the GOP's plan to prohibit PAC contributions to federal candidates, and essentially sabotage it. Given the vast differences between the Senate and House versions and the lack of time before incumbent congressmen went home to campaign (and spend more PAC money), members of the Senate-House conference committee in charge of sending the president a bill never had a chance; recognizing this, they decided not to meet. (Even if the committee had met, little would have been accomplished: Foley, succumbing to pressure from both sides of the aisle, had appointed conferees such as John Dingell, chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and William Ford, then chairman of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, who had little desire for any serious campaign finance reform.)

The scenario the House incumbents were hoping for—let everyone vote for a campaign finance reform measure, and then let it die a quiet death in conference negotiations—came to pass.

Ad nauseum

During the debate on the House floor last year, Rep. Pat Roberts insisted that new campaign finance laws would be a sure bet from the 102nd Congress. "We will get a reform bill, a true reform bill next time, not this time." While we hold our breath, we have a moment to ponder the question: What is true reform?

Liberal congressmen and self-proclaimed public interest groups like Common Cause continually insist that the key to campaign finance reform lies in spending limits and public financing of campaigns. But as Congress so recently proved, spending limits can be set absurdly high or riddled with loopholes.

Public financing is necessary, the argument goes, because private money is inherently tainted and inevitably forces the type of tit for tat seen in the Keating case. But after the eighties' spate of noxious campaigns, the public would rather pay for toxic waste dumps behind elementary schools. Right now only about 20 percent of taxpayers contribute to the presidential check-off fund; as a recent Federal Election Commission-sponsored focus group study suggests, the other 80 percent feel pretty strongly about leaving that box blank. "It was often difficult to keep the group focused on the subject at hand because of their anger at politicians and a perception of wasteful spending by the government," noted the report. "Their anger associated with those concerns contaminated their consideration of presidential campaign financing."

Imagine how furious the public would be at paying for congressional campaigns—and rightfully furious, considering the quality of most of those campaigns. What is necessary is a plan that doesn't merely say "let's hope the candidates don't spend too much" and offer them our tax dollars not to do so. Instead, we need to attack rising campaign costs at the source. So when the 102nd Congress gets together again to talk campaign finance, here's what they should do:

1) *Require free and truthful TV ads.* Real campaign reform must start with campaign spending. And one of the prime factors in accelerating campaign costs is the cost of TV ads. Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution estimates that between 1976 and 1990, the cost of TV advertising in congressional campaigns rose 169 percent. That, of course, sharpened the imperative to raise money from folks like Charles Keating. The best way to stop this desperate money chase is to give candidates air time for free. Mandate that, in exchange for their broadcast licenses, the Federal Communications Commission require television stations to donate a few minutes every evening during the fortnight prior to the general election for ads from House and Senate candidates.

Still, Senate candidates, who now spend 60 percent of their overall budgets on broadcast ads, don't just blow it filming commercials and buying time on the local network. The real money goes to high-paid political consultants like David Garth and Roger Ailes, whose thinking helps shape those trenchant and sophisticated ads. A corollary reform could dramatically cut their receipts. In exchange for free air time, restrict all TV ads to having the candidate speak directly to viewers or be seen debating his op-

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ponent. Not only does this dramatically cut production costs, it also improves the substance of commercials. Anyone who's ever read the transcript of a fabulous TV news segment knows how this works. Without the blue skies and swaying cornfields in the background, the words sound a little different than you remembered. During campaigns, of course, that's a good thing—you'll get a far better look at what you're voting for. For instance, instead of an MTV-style edit showing the candidate orating a crowd into a frenzy, all you get is the candidate orating—letting his *words* stimulate frenzy, if they can.

Talking-head commercials won't just improve the content of innocuous meet-the-candidate spots; they'll also reduce the likelihood of the sleaziest sort of negative ads. Suddenly it's Candidate Kane accusing his opponent of cuddling up inappropriately to zoo creatures—not the faceless Independent Committee to Protect Zebras and Elect Candidate Kane. Making the candidate take responsibility for every word that airs won't make ads all sweetness and light—and shouldn't. (What would campaigns be if candidates couldn't criticize each other's decisions and character?) But it will make candidates more concerned that what they say about their opponents is true. Apply the same rules to radio.

Forget public financing: What with congressmen spending $78 million a year on franked mail, we've already got it—but only for incumbents.

Had these provisions been in effect last year, New Hampshire Republican Bill Zeliff probably wouldn't have used 30-second TV spots to label his leading primary opponent, who had done consulting for foreign corporations, a "paid foreign agent." Texas voters probably would've learned more about their gubernatorial choices than that some of them smoked pot in the seventies. And Rep. Denny Smith of Oregon would've had to scrap that informative ad featuring a backdrop of Adolf Hitler addressing a delirious crowd—the one that accused Democratic challenger Mike Kopetski of siding with Saddam Hussein. "Mike, appeasement is wrong," the announcer intoned. Kopetski's crime? Urging the UN, rather than the U.S., to take the lead in responding to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Do such commercials really enhance politicians' stature or improve public discourse?

The chief critics of these proposals would be TV ad departments and the David Garths of this world. However, in 1988, TV stations earned roughly $27 billion in advertising; a few minutes here and there every other year is not going to destroy their revenues. (Clearly, the specifics have to be more precisely worked out for primary elections with larger fields of candidates.) And putting Garth, Ailes, and their cronies out of work is in itself a reason to adopt these changes.

2) *Set out-of-state contribution limits.* There is nothing wrong with a congressional candidate raising, say, $10 from every constituent in his district. There is something seriously wrong with a candidate having 40 percent or more of his campaign spending financed by out-of-state PACs and individual donors. More than a dozen of the 31 senators running for reelection in 1990 received more than half of their campaign funds from outside their home states. Jesse Helms and Harvey Gantt counted on non-constituents to raise 69 and 67 percent, respectively, of their campaign funds—a major reason why the North Carolina Senate race was the most expensive in the nation, with a total of $24.7 million spent. Any comprehensive campaign finance reform must therefore stipulate that 75 percent of the money a candidate raises must come from within the state. For obvious reasons, candidates should be required to raise virtually all their money from the constituents they intend to serve.

3. *Ban all PAC contributions.* It's long been obvious that PACs give money for a single purpose: to influence legislation. And PACs realize that the worst way to do that is to support candidates who don't have a prayer of winning. The easiest way, of course, is to fill the coffers of incumbents, especially those who serve on or chair committees that have jurisdiction over a particular PAC's interests. That's why oil, gas, utility, and other energy industry PACs contributed $236,500 to Senator J. Bennett Johnston, chairman of the Senate Energy Committee, during 1989 and the first quarter of 1990. That's why the powerful trial lawyers' lobby bankrolled the campaign of Senator Ernest Hollings, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, who has used his po-

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sition to thwart tort reform. If one needed any more proof of what the PACs were up to, last year they gave nearly $80 million to incumbents and a mere $5 million to their opponents. Former Senator William Proxmire puts it succinctly: "The [PAC] contributions, in effect, are bribes."

Critics say that eliminating PACs would only make candidates more dependent on wealthy contributors. But the $1,000 limits on personal and corporate contributions, holdovers from the post-Watergate reforms, would still be in place. Moreover, the out-of-state spending limits would make a lot of those well-to-do contributors irrelevant.

4) *Virtually abolish the franking privilege*, except when a congressman is responding directly to a constituent's query. The frank, which allows members to sign their names to mail in lieu of postage, has long allowed congressmen to flood their districts in election years with what is essentially paid political advertising. Paid for by the taxpayers, that is. Up for reelection in 1990, Senator James McClure had his office send out 608,170 pieces of mail at a cost of $90,300 during the first three months of 1989—more than had been spent on his behalf throughout the previous year. From April to September 1990, Senator Dan Coats of Indiana, who had been appointed to fill Vice President Quayle's seat and faced a special election in November, mailed out a whopping 13.1 million pieces of franked mail—$1.8 million worth.

Members, of course, insist that the frank is used for official business, which begs the question: Why do these mailing costs surge during election years ($78 million in 1988, as compared to $44 million in 1987) and nearly double between the first and last required quarterly reporting periods as an election draws near? Forget public financing: At $34 million a year, we've already got it—but only for incumbents.

5) *Put some bite into the Federal Election Commission (FEC).* Banning PACs, franking, and slick TV campaigns will do a lot to lower costs and lessen sleaze. But what purpose is there in enacting reforms without a tough, independent regulatory agency to enforce them? By itself, the FEC's structure is a guarantee for gridlock, being made up of six members (three from each party) who are appointed specifically for their partisanship. The result, former FEC Assistant General Counsel Daniel Swillinger explains, is that candidates know "the commission is never going to get four votes, so they can do anything they want. . . . It is undercutting what was anyway a rather weak enforcement system and making it even more toothless."

During the 1988 Senate elections, for instance, the National Republican Senatorial Committee was charged with failing to report nearly $3 million in contributions earmarked for 12 campaigns. The FEC's general counsel found that the committee was in violation of the campaign act; the commission, however, voted along party lines. With a three-to-three tie, no action was taken. The answer here is either to add an odd member or remove the presumption of partisanship in selecting commissioners.

The other major problem with the FEC is a procedural one: The commission is notoriously slow in resolving cases. By the time the FEC figures things out, Mr. Smith is already well into his term. Take one 1982 North Carolina campaign, in which Rep. Charlie Rose charged that his opponent accepted illegal services from a direct mail operation associated with Senator Jesse Helms. Two years later, with the 1984 campaign well under way, the FEC was still investigating those old charges.

FECless

To make comprehensive reform work, the FEC will have to be aggressive, making sure that complaints filed during a particular general election period can be resolved before the campaign is over. To that end, Congress should give the FEC the power to conduct field investigations and random audits, to seek injunctions in enforcement cases so that it can act promptly when a violation is about to occur, and to impose stiff fines on transgressors.

These FEC reforms aren't radical: In fact, they're made every year by the commission itself in its annual report to Congress. The real difficulty, as David Magleby and Candice Nelson point out in *The Money Chase*, is that the FEC is currently "just the kind of agency Congress wants to regulate campaign finance laws; it provides disclosure but rarely acts in a way that could influence an election outcome."

The same bluff applies in all aspects of congressional campaign reform. And members of the House, many of whom raise twice as much from out-of-state PACs as their challengers raise overall, are sure to balk at these five proposals, as they have done through the years at even the most tepid legislative reform.

That fact shouldn't surprise us: Who expects morality from Congress? What we *do* expect, however, is self-interest. And that may be what ultimately pushes Congress toward real campaign reform. A few more Keating Five-type episodes may do more than erode the institution's sagging credibility. It may prompt voters to start slapping term limits on their members. And that should do the trick. For the one thing incumbents hate more than campaign reform is not getting the chance to campaign at all. ❑

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Pennies From Heaven

It's time for Uncle Sam to pass the collection plate

by Elizabeth Lesly

When Joyce Siegrist's coven, Our Lady of the Roses Wiccan Church, was granted tax-exempt status by the state of Rhode Island in 1989, she was elated. The 40-member congregation is now saving "a good amount of money" in sales tax on the candles, incense burners, chalices, candlesticks and black robes needed for its rituals, which are held several times a month in a rented room of the local Grange Hall.

Why do witches merit a cut rate on newts' eyes, bats' wings, and other party supplies? Well, goes the received wisdom, because those objects are just as sacred to a witch as a crucifix is to a Catholic or the Torah to a Jew. In the eyes of the government, all religions are created equal. That kind of religious relativism seems to make sense—except that it begs the real question: Why does *any* religious organization deserve a government subsidy in the first place? None does, but all receive one, thanks to a misreading of the First Amendment's religion provisions.

Tax the churches? The idea's been intellectually mothballed for years. These days, it's the province of the fringe—radical anticlerics, the Murray O'Hair school of secular humanists, and crabby fair-tax fanatics. But if you set aside your perfectly reasonable anti-anticlerical bias for a moment, you'll discover that to favor taxing churches you don't have to be a nun-basher avenging the times Sister Mary whipped chalk at you in fourth-grade Latin. In fact, the Supreme Court, in a series of decisions over the past eight years, has ruled that taxing churches is perfectly legal. Several church-and-state experts familiar with the cases—especially a decision in January 1990—predict that local governments will subject churches to real estate taxes before the end of the decade.

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The purpose of the First Amendment's religious provisions was to prevent the government from discriminating against or in favor of any religion—in particular or as a group. From the point of view of the Constitution, then, there's no difference between taxing all churches equally and not taxing them at all. (Of course, the state can't tax *only* churches, even if it taxes them all equally; that would violate the free exercise clause.) But from the point of view of the average taxpayer, there's a mighty big difference: As near as one can figure, the wealth of American religious organizations is approaching a trillion dollars; some church watchers estimate that religious organizations own one-fifth of all private property in the country. The *Village Voice* found in 1987 that the Catholic Church was New York City's largest private landowner. Meanwhile, the homeowners of any given community are kicking in with ever-escalating property taxes to help provide services like garbage removal and police protection to tax-exempt churches that only one-third of them attend.

This is not to say that churches should be taxed on property used primarily for charitable purposes—soup kitchens, say, or schools; like other nonprofits, churches should receive a Good Samaritan exemption. This is also not to say that our society shouldn't value the purely religious functions that churches perform; taxing something is not generally a sign of public disapproval. But property used primarily for religious purposes should be taxed like any other property. "Strong religious adherents think that religion should be free of any government action; they put religion above government," said Philip Kurland, a constitutional law professor at the University of Chicago. "The Constitution didn't do that."

The highest-profile examination of churches' tax-exempt status in recent years was trotted out in 1978, in the Chevy Chase/Goldie Hawn film, *Foul Play*. The running gag in the movie was the villainous Tax the Churches League, an organization of wackos so obsessed with church wealth and power that they planned to assassinate the Pope to make a political statement.

One of the terrorists explained her bitterness this way: "Ten years ago, we attempted a peaceful campaign for the taxation of these billion-dollar corporations. But they support the economic system, so the economic system supported them. We were attacked, laughed at, and finally imprisoned."

Pretty nuts, right? Well, a century and a half earlier, James Madison, whose *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments* had provided a key philosophical underpinning of the church-state relationship, cautioned against much the same "absurd" realities. In an 1832 essay, Madison warned that "besides the danger of a direct mixture of Religion & civil Government, there is an evil which ought to be guarded against in the indefinite accumulation of property . . . by ecclesiastical corporations. . . . Are the U.S. duly awake to the tendency of the precedents [of church wealth] they are establishing, in the multiplied incorporations of Religious Congregations with the faculty of acquiring & holding property real as well as personal?" Madison continued: "And must not bodies, perpetual in their existence, and which may be always gaining without ever losing, speedily gain more than is useful, and in time more than is safe?"

Have the churches, as Madison feared, accumulated more than is safe?

No one knows for sure, because religious organizations aren't subject to any financial disclosure laws. But there is enough evidence

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to suggest that cities and states could generate quite a bit of tax revenue by milking these sacred cows.

Onward Christian brokers

A 1931 University of Chicago Department of Economics study used data from the Bureau of the Census to estimate the value of overall church wealth divided by the population. The results were staggering for the time:

	Total church wealth	$ per capita
1890	$65,037,000,000	$1,036
1912	$183,300,000,000	$1,965
1922	$320,804,000,000	$2,951

Without even adjusting for inflation or appreciation, and multiplying the per capita value of church wealth in 1922 by the present U.S. population of approximately 250 million, the value of such wealth today would be more than $700 billion.

Of course, estimates based on 1931 numbers leave a little to be desired. Unfortunately, the Bureau of the Census stopped collecting information on church wealth in 1936 because the funding dried up. These days, the only sliver of church wealth that anyone can guess at is real estate holdings. Even this information is elusive: Local tax assessors are notorious for not keeping current assessments on property they can't tax; a lot of church property is listed on local tax rolls under a different name; and no one has the stamina or the zeal to visit every municipality in the country and comb through tax rolls in search of these imperfect assessments.

But Martin A. Larson and the Rev. C. Stanley Lowell made a pretty big dent. They took on the tedious process of reviewing the tax rolls of 14 large cities and published their findings in 1976. The property in these 14 cities represented only 3 percent of all the private property in the country. Larson estimated then that more than 10 percent of all the real property in the country was owned by churches and exempt from taxes—at a value of at least $155 billion in the 14 cities alone. The exemptions cost those cities over $4 billion in lost tax revenue.

Today Larson can't even guess how much the property holdings are worth after the economic boom

When is a wall not a wall?

It's a truth we really do hold self-evident: the existence of a "wall" between church and state—a wall so sturdy and impenetrable that it has been oratorically erected to refute everything from busing to abortion. But as politicians reverentially stand beside it, the courts have long been walking through it. The notion of complete church-state separation is a swell ideal, but not one that has any legal grounding in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, or any other of the usual sources of American law. In fact, the phrase first appeared in a note scribbled by Thomas Jefferson to a bunch of Connecticut Baptists.

On January 1, 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Baptist association of Danbury to explain why he would not declare a national day of fasting, as Presidents Washington and Adams had occasionally done in the past. "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law regarding an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State," Jefferson wrote.

Jefferson's wall metaphor made virtually no impression on the legal eagles of his time; in fact, it seemed not to strike public fancy for the next 75 years, until a bigamy case brought it back to life. *Reynolds* v. *United States*, an 1878 suit against a Mormon who wanted exponential conjugal bliss, marked the first time that the Supreme Court dusted off Jefferson's letter and made mention of the "wall." "Coming as this does from an acknowledged leader . . . it may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect the [First] Amendment thus secured," Chief Justice Morrison Waite stated in the court's opinion. But even as he glorified the wall, Waite was busy breaking it down—ignoring the Mormon church's claim to be following the higher laws of God and stripping Reynolds of his wives. Put to complicated, real-life tests, it seemed, the wall left a little to be desired.

Still, *Everson* v. *Board of Education*, a 1947 busing case, brought the wall into 20th century constitutional law. Proclaimed Justice Hugo Black: "The First Amendment has erected a wall between Church and State. That wall must be kept high and

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of the eighties. "It would be much, much more now," shouted Larson, who, at 94 and nearly deaf, hasn't updated his research since 1976.

For an example of what all that untaxed property can mean for one state, consider New York. The state's Board of Equalization and Assessment in 1988 counted 7,533 church- or clergy-owned properties in New York City alone that were wholly or partly tax exempt. The estimated value of these thousands of properties: $3.99 billion. For the entire state, the 29,801 church properties in 1988 had an estimated value of $9.6 billion.

Meanwhile, New York City is again flirting with financial crisis and cannot provide even the most basic services for its lower- and middle-class citizens. And with a credit rating the lowest in its history, the state of New York is struggling to recoup revenue from any source, however meager. In January, it cut the value of its once-coveted Regent's scholarships to just $25 per student for the spring semester.

Jon Murray, son of super-atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair and president of United World Atheists in Austin, says that 20 percent of all the private property in the United States is owned by religious groups. "I think everyone should understand that churches are big business," Murray said. "They have huge payrolls, take huge collections every Sunday. They have incomes like big corporations do. And as a big business, they should bear part of the burden of keeping up the country—roads, parks, etc. If they love the people and love the community, why don't they put up the money to keep the community going?"

Amen and G-men

Zealots like Murray drive people in the religious community nuts. But if they resent his charges, why don't they step forward and release the figures that would prove his claims absurd? Right now, religious organizations are the only nonprofit groups in the country not required to report financial information to the Internal Revenue Service. Occasionally, the value of a denomination's billion-dollar pension fund or a million-dollar donation to an individual church will be mentioned in the religious press, but there is no comprehensive accounting of church wealth.

impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach." Strong words—but due to the particulars of the case, irrelevant ones. The decision allowed New Jersey to continue using state funds to bus kids to religious schools. As Justice Robert H. Jackson noted in his dissent, "[T]he undertones of the opinion, advocating complete and uncompromising separation between Church and State, seem utterly discordant with its conclusion yielding support to their commingling in educational matters. . . ." The very permeable *Everson* case set the precedent upon which a whole slew of government and religion cases have been decided.

While 1970's *Walz* v. *Tax Commission of New York*, rejecting an adamant atheist's objection to property tax exemptions for churches, found Chief Justice Warren Burger longing nostalgically for the wall—referring to "the desired insulation and separation" between church and state—he knew he had to give some ground to reality. A year later, he noted in *Lemon* v. *Kurtzman*, a suit over partial state funding of Pennsylvania's parochial schools, that the "line of separation, far from being a 'wall,' is a blurred, indistinct, and variable barrier."

Without this wall to block their vision, courts can discriminate among individual cases without deferring to misleading philosophical absolutes. But politicians are still very much in thrall to the wall. In the 1990 confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee David Souter, Senator Joe Biden had no time for the intricacies of the God/government confabulation. Citing Souter's published criticism of the *Lemon* decision, Biden charged that Souter had not indicated "what guarantees of religious freedom he would impose in its place. We have very little idea of how high he thinks the wall of separation between church and state ought to be."

Biden's assumption—that religious freedom can be effected only by utter disconnectedness of our political system from any ecclesiastical ones—has always been wrong. The interests of both always will and should intersect in a multitude of ways. Which is why, for more than 100 years, Jefferson's little note about the wall has been, not a cornerstone, but a stray pebble on the rocky shoals of church and state.

—*Elliott Beard*

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If churches' financial information is shielded from the prying eyes of the IRS, how is the IRS able to uncover any abuses of tax-exempt status? It relies on "newspaper articles [and] concerned citizens to just bring information to our attention," said Wilson Fadley, a spokesman at the IRS. Now that's reassuring—an enforcement system reliant on tattle-tales, ax-grinders, and the press, which has trouble reporting on the subject since no information is publicly available. In 1989, 464,136 religious organizations were registered with the IRS. In the past decade, the agency has revoked the tax exemptions of only about 20.

The administrative roadblocks to starting an investigation are formidable. One of the seven IRS regional commissioners must approve any audit, and since there is little financial information to substantiate an investigator's initial suspicions, few investigations are launched. Those that are conducted tend to be aimed at churches that stand out—those with pastel-suited preachers, politically unpalatable doctrines, arcane sacraments—because they are the ripest targets for media scrutiny. It's invariably the sects whose adherents lack connections that see their exemptions challenged.

"It's a very, very sensitive issue," said Larry Gibbs, who was IRS commissioner from 1986 until 1989. "The organized and main-line religions in this country are very jealous of their prerogatives, and any indication at all that the IRS is doing anything at all to violate a right of a church will guarantee that the IRS, Congress, and the media hear about it from organized religion."

Gibbs, who would seem to have been in the best position imaginable to know about tax-exemption abuses, said that churches' immunity from filing tax returns makes it nearly impossible for anyone in the secular world to learn anything about churches' operations. "As a former tax administrator and a taxpayer, I have concerns, particularly based on some of the things that have happened in the last 10 to 15 years. I cite the TV evangelist cases and I also cite some of the very abusive tax shelter cases. I wonder if the same things are going on," said Gibbs, who is now an attorney in Washington. Because there's no paper trail, he said, "I have no way of knowing."

Papal bull

This hear-no-evil, see-no-evil approach to policing exemptions doesn't provide much temporal incentive for religious organizations to stick to the straight and narrow. Because of the lack of disclosure and oversight, the public hears only about the handful of spectacular cases that the press digs up—the air-conditioned dog houses and payoffs to prostitutes. Yet there have been enough such cases in recent years to suggest that some of the massive religious tax exemptions go to support less-than-spiritual pursuits.

Last year, Archbishop Eugene A. Marino of Atlanta resigned after word of his longtime affair with Vicki R. Long leaked out. After a Coopers & Lybrand audit, it became clear that the archbishop was providing Long with a lot more than affection—between 1986 and 1990, Long received more than $21,000 from the funds of the archdiocese and two of its parishes. While it's troubling that Long received all of this tax-exempt money, it's even more disturbing that the payments went undetected for nearly four years.

It was only after the Rev. George Stallings Jr. of Washington, D.C., broke with the Catholic Church to form the afrocentric Imani Temple that the Church thought to check into how he had handled the finances at St. Teresa of Avila parish. Last year, *The Washington Post* reported that Stallings for years had used church funds to lavishly renovate his private Anacostia home and had put at least one of his lovers on the parish's payroll.

For all of its good works, the Catholic Church has had more than its share of bad apples in recent years. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the number of court cases charging Catholic Church personnel with sexual abuse approached 2,000 in 1990, and the Church has paid out as much as $300 million to settle such claims in the past six or seven years. The *Times* cited a 1985 internal church report that estimated the organization could face $1 billion in such claims by 1995. Clearly, the founding fathers never contemplated that 1) a religious organization would ever have the funds to blow a billion dollars on one project in 10 years or 2) that they would blow it to cover expenses for such earthly pleasures. There may be no violations of the letter of the religious tax exemption statute here (though one would hope that the IRS is investigating), but surely there is a violation of its spirit.

Breaking down the wall

The First Amendment, to put it simply, prohibits both state sponsorship of and state hostility towards religion. Government relations with religious bodies must fall in the neutral zone between. The way the following Supreme Court decisions define that neutral zone, it is up to the legislature to decide whether to tax or not to tax religious organizations.

- 1970: *Walz* v. *Tax Commission of New York*. The Court held that a property tax exemption that applied not only to churches but also to "nonprofit, quasi-public corporations" was constitutional.
- 1989: *Texas Monthly* v. *Bullock*. The court held

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that a sales-tax exemption that applied only to periodicals published by religious groups was unconstitutional.

➤1990: *Jimmy Swaggart Ministries* v. *Board of Equalization of California*. The court held that a sales tax on religious organizations that also applied to other charitable, nonprofit, and local government entities was constitutional.

The language used in the *Swaggart* decision was so broad that many legal experts say that other church property—like investment income, donation income, and real estate assets—can now be taxed. Michael W. McConnell, the University of Chicago law professor who argued the case for Jimmy Swaggart Ministries and lost, saw the decision as the beginning of the end of some of the tax exemptions for the nation's religious bodies: "Now, church activities and church properties are just as fully subject to taxation as any other properties may be."

Still, the Rev. Dean Kelley, counselor on religious liberty to the National Council of Churches, is not about to throw in the towel. Church property should not be taxed because churchgoers "already pay a fair share of running the commonwealth," he reasons. "Why be taxed again? It comes from the same sources—members and contributors. . . .

"The cost of running a city should be borne by the producers of wealth, such as profit-making corporations and employed individuals. Providing police and fire protection to the whole city is part of the cost of running the whole city and should not be charged to nonprofit organizations. [A fire department is] employed to protect the community against fire. Whether it's a church or haberdashery, it does not greatly affect costs to the fire department."

But taxes aren't assessed according to who is making a profit. Laid-off factory workers or money-losing businessmen aren't freed from their property-tax obligations. They all pay, whether or not they belong to any church in the area, and therefore cover the fire protection and other city services enjoyed by a religious institution that means nothing to them.

In his *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*, Madison argued for the freedom of religious expression, but the main point of the treatise was that citizens not be required to pay taxes that went toward supporting or maintaining religions to which they might not subscribe. These days, with more than half the country rarely, if ever, seeing the inside of a church, and many cities and states struggling to come up with the money to pay for basic services, Madison's message is more important than ever. The many should not be taxed to support the religious beliefs of the few. It's time we put some of these billions for heaven to work here on earth.

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

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Jane Mayer

The Wall Street Journal

If all you had to go on was President Bush's story, you'd think the entire Kuwaiti citizenry spent January on its knees, in an extended, prayerful vigil. But in her irreverent January 24 feature, the Cairo-based Mayer unearthed some conspicuously less careworn Kuwaiti refugees—chronicling the phenomenon allied officials have delicately termed "the disco problem." As 500,000 UN troops defended their country, draft-aged Kuwaiti youth hunkered down in Cairo's five-star hotels, nibbling hors d'oeuvres, drinking champagne, and grooving to American pop hits—despite Kuwaiti officials' desperate attempts at "disco damage control." "I've advised our people not to be so happy," said the worried Kuwaiti ambassador to Egypt, who assigned sentinels to local clubs to take the names of partying youth. But Kuwaiti exiles were simply not inclined to worry. "The troops over there can surely carry it," shrugged a nattily dressed 18-year-old with a student deferment. And the Persian Gulf party carried on.

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Nominations for stories published or aired in March will close April 15. The winner will be announced in the June issue.

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Paradigm Lost

The shortcomings of the small-town solution

by Nicholas Lemann

Every time a president of the United States proclaims himself to be in favor of returning power to states, cities, and neighborhoods, and opposed to our trying to solve national problems from Washington, he is echoing, probably unconsciously, a little book published in 1953 called *The Quest for Community*, by Robert Nisbet. Nisbet's work is the mother lode of anti-big-government conservatism in America. Views like his certainly existed before *The Quest for Community*, but they weren't expressed with nearly as much drama and intellectual elegance and so had less force and respectability. Just as black nationalism had a life apart from Malcolm X but is now impossible to imagine without him, hostility to centralized liberal democracy has become inextricably linked to Nisbet. That *The Quest for Community* was recently republished,* nearly 40 years after it was written, is testament to the triumph of Nisbetism as the stated creed of American politics at the highest level.

Ideas are, understandably, usually discussed in presidential campaigns at the bromide level only. Reading Nisbet is therefore extremely useful, because it provides a full explication of the case against big government that we are used to hearing in the form of a one-liner. During the past quarter-century or so, hostility to the federal government has gone from being the province of Southerners and Babbitts to taking over at least a part of the house of liberalism—that part that rereads *Small is Beautiful* and favors the slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally." The antibureaucratic, antifederal government "New Paradigm" movement that

Nicholas Lemann is a national correspondent for The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

**The Quest for Community.* Robert Nisbet. *ICS Press, $10.95.*

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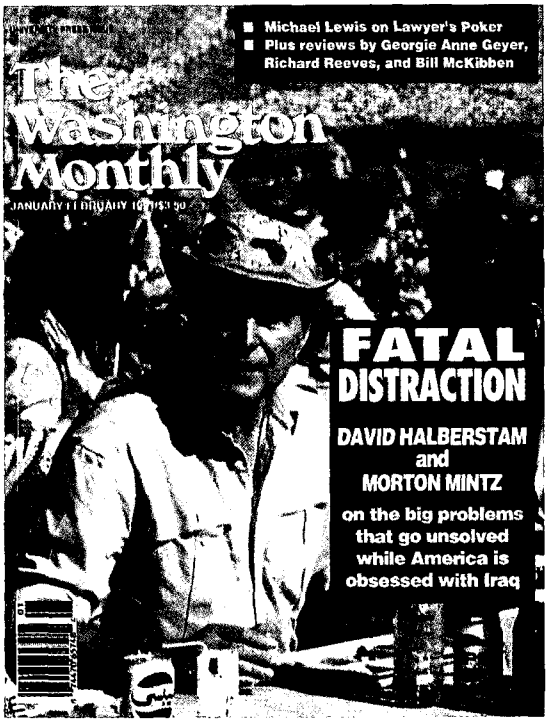
IF YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO BE RIGHT TOO SOON



Throughout the Gulf crisis, while the rest of the media acted as cheerleaders for war, we were almost alone in saying it didn't make sense to use our military might to devastate a small country when all we wanted to do was to punish one man. Does that sound odd, even crazy? That's what people said when:

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is associated with White House aide James Pinkerton has succeeded in making suspicion of Washington into a smart-hip-conservative (rather than dumb-rube-conservative) position, and Pinkerton has attracted a good number of liberal followers too. It looks as if Nisbetism is well on its way to becoming, finally, consensual, which is all the more reason to look at it closely. Doing so reveals that Nisbet's argument is more interesting and complicated than you might think, but also much less airtight.

The urge to merge

Nisbet begins with the premise that all people have a deep, fundamental need to belong to some kind of community—that the notion of the free individual as the basic social unit is ridiculous on its face. The whole thrust of modernization—defining it very broadly to include most political and social developments since the Renaissance, and even some before that—has been to chip away at the institutions through which most people have fulfilled their need for community. These are the family (especially the extended family), the stable town or village, the church, rigid social and economic classes, and guilds for people in the same line of work—the set of institutions that together constitute the traditional form of authority that the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies called *Gemeinschaft*. Such "intermediate associations" are, to Nisbet, unquestionably the ideal structures around which to build human society; he is a conservative in the literal sense of the word, meaning that he regards change with suspicion. "The greatest intellectual and moral offense the modern intellectual can be found guilty of," he observes sourly at one point, "is that of seeming to think or act outside what is commonly held to be the linear progress of civilization." It doesn't seem terribly unfair to call him a nostalgist for the Middle Ages, and in that sense he is completely out of tune with the kind of conservatism that wins elections in the United States today.

Intermediate associations don't simply disappear; they are forcibly replaced, usually by a more centralized form of authority, which Nisbet calls the State. The bulk of *The Quest for Community* consists of Nisbet demonstrating how a rogue's gallery of political thinkers throughout history (Plato, Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, Locke, Marx, and, especially, Rousseau) have justified an ever more powerful State, and ever less powerful intermediate associations. Quite often the champions of the State are also champions of the individual and his rights and freedoms, but this, to Nisbet, hardly lets them off the hook. Because the need for community is so deep-seated, society will always orient itself toward one form of it or another. If you kill off the intermediate associations in the name of liberating the individual, the inevitable result will be that people will direct their communitarian impulses toward the State—and that's exactly what many of the champions of individual rights wanted. Thus Nisbet doesn't find it at all paradoxical that the French Revolution should have combined glorification of the individual, hostility to traditional forms of authority, and political dictatorship; he sees the three principles as being intertwined.

Although Nisbet appears to be a man deeply out of tune with his times—many people feel they're living in the wrong century, but he's the relatively rare case who's in the wrong millennium—there are ways in which *The Quest for Community* bears the distinctive stamp of the period when it was written, the early fifties. His discussion of the rise of the State has an oomph that a writer today wouldn't be able to summon, because it appeared then that all of modern history led inexorably to Hitler and Stalin. Totalitarianism could be plausibly presented as the end result of the destruction of the intermediate associations; there was no need for Nisbet to strike a pose of reasonably understanding the need to strike a balance between the two forms of community, because he could safely portray one as completely evil and the other as completely good. Liberalism in *The Quest for Community* is a way station on the road to hell, not a stable, sustainable philosophy of governance; its main historical purpose is to soften people up for dictatorship. Only before the Hungarian uprising of 1956 could someone get away with writing, as Nisbet did, "the transition from liberal democracy to totalitarianism will not seem too arduous or unpleasant. It will indeed scarcely be noticed. . . ."

Also, Nisbet's view of the condition of American society at the time he was writing has a lot in common with that of the leading liberal social critics of the fifties, such as David Riesman. He saw the country as being soulless, adrift, materialistic, conformist, advertising-riddled, rootless, corporate, and dominated by the rise of an alarming new creature, "mass man." "[O]ur age has come to seem a period of moral and spiritual chaos, of certainties abandoned, of creeds outworn, and of values devalued," he wrote. All this gloom fit perfectly into Nisbet's schema—the above-mentioned ills could all be traced to the replacement of intermediate associations by the State—but today it is dated by its grimness, which seems as if it would have been more appropriate to a description of Berlin in 1931 than the U.S. in the "Ozzie and Harriet" era.

If Nisbetism is more rooted in the early post-World War II period than it might at first appear, it is

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also less wholly transferable to the present than his contemporary admirers would have you believe. Liberals' Nisbet problem is huge and obvious: He doesn't believe in either the primacy of individual liberties or the potential benefits of the modern welfare state. Conservatives' Nisbet problem is subtler, but unmistakable. Nisbet is antimilitary ("the State is the outgrowth of war") and anti-big-business, on the grounds that both tend to erode the position of his beloved intermediate associations. In fact he seems to be completely agnostic on the subject of capitalism itself; he calls it "a sand heap of disconnected particles of humanity," unless it is primarily not an economic system but "a system of social and moral allegiances." He has a benign view of some institutions that conservatives have distanced themselves from, such as hereditary classes and the Southern side in the Civil War, and others that they would see as too liberal, like labor unions; at the end of *The Quest for Community*, he uses rhetoric that would appear to indicate approval-before-the-fact of the much-hated campus "multiculturalism" movement. (In case you're wondering what the landed gentry, the confederacy, the plumbers' union, and the African-American Studies Department could possibly have in common, they're all intermediate associations.)

Liberalism in *The Quest for Community* is a way station on the road to hell, not a stable, sustainable philosophy of government; its main historical purpose is to soften people up for dictatorship.

The collapse of communism dates Nisbet, too. By his logic, totalitarian systems should be invulnerable. He says that once a society embraces the State, it can only move in the direction of absolute dictatorship; there's no possibility of stopping somewhere along the way, or of reversing the process. One reason why is that totalitarianism holds its power not through repression, but by creating loyal, community-starved masses, who "are never tortured, flogged, or imprisoned, or humiliated; who instead are cajoled, flattered, stimulated by the rulers; but who are nonetheless relentlessly destroyed as human beings, ground down into mere shells of humanity." Therefore rebellion is impossible, because once the State has successfully destroyed the intermediate associations it has guaranteed that people will gravitate toward slavish loyalty to the dictator—he's all the community they've got. "No intellectual defense against totalitarianism could be more futile," Nisbet announces imperiously, "than that which sees the States of Hitler and Stalin as operating in open contempt and hatred of the people."

Now we know that in totalitarian states, the masses are, in fact, tortured, flogged, and imprisoned, that dictators do operate in open contempt and hatred of the people, and that the urge for freedom, rather than being extinguished forever, does still exist and can make itself felt. All that puts not just totalitarianism in a different light, but liberalism too: It now appears that Western-style welfare-state liberalism is not just sustainable but triumphant, and that fascism and communism were the temporary aberrations. Even to entertain the idea that liberalism is not fundamentally corrupt, that it should be reformed rather than dispensed with entirely, is to reject Nisbet's central tenet.

William A. Schambra of the American Enterprise Institute, in a foreword written for the reissue of *The Quest for Community*, demonstrates the kind of spin that has to be put on Nisbetism if it is to have any present-day political utility. The examples he uses to delineate the evils of the State come not from the Civil War and the French Revolution, and not from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, but from the Great Society; he identifies Nisbet's dreaded State with the federal government, and intermediate associations with states, localities, and neighborhoods. Thus in the bad old days, "the State's bureaucracies and courts disparaged and assailed the moral and cultural standards of local communities as they manifested themselves in local laws and customs, suggesting that they were parochial, narrow-minded, reactionary, and even unconstitutional." But now we realize that, in the case of ghettos, for example, "the cycle of poverty can be broken only by a renewal of self-confidence, self-discipline, and belief in hard work within the individual—and those values are taught chiefly by strong, vibrant families, churches, and neighborhoods."

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For me, a Southerner born in the year of the *Brown* decision, there are uncomfortable echoes in this kind of rhetoric—echoes of what I heard throughout my childhood about states' rights and federal oppression. Race is the tough issue for American conservative followers of Nisbet. Slavery was nurtured and protected by intermediate associations. The American political language of hostility to the federal government's encroachments on local customs arose in the 19th century, substantially as a way of defending slavery. It took the rise of a national culture for slavery to be ended; it was no accident that the themes of union and emancipation were intertwined. Nisbet doesn't mention American slavery, but he is well aware of the generally nationalizing (that is, to him, unfortunate) effects of the Civil War. The end of Reconstruction was an event Nisbet surely approved of; during the succeeding rebirth of intermediate associations in the South, the Jim Crow system was created. In the mid-20th century, every lasting civil rights victory resulted from the national community imposing its will on more traditional and smaller-scale forms of community, and in every case the intelligent Southern opposition was stated in the form of Nisbet-like warnings about the dangers of State power.

Nationally, what caused dislike of the State to arise in the minds of most Americans was a series of policies liberals enacted through the bureaucracy and the courts because they figured they'd lose in more democratic venues like the Congress, and of these, by far the most important were racial remedies like busing, affirmative action, minority set-asides, and the redrawing of local election districts. You don't hear much grumbling from either the voting public or conservative intellectuals about the SEC, the FDA, the FAA, or the EPA, even though they too are instruments of the State. The tremendous appeal (to Schambra, and most other observers these days) of the idea that the inner-city ghettos are going to be saved through a neighborhood-by-neighborhood revival of *Gemeinschaft* is the other side of the coin: People want the country's main racial problem to be solved, but they want to find a way to keep the State from taking on the job.

Divided we fall

The truth is that in general, and on racial issues in particular, it is not very useful to begin with the assumption that everything must be handled locally rather than nationally. Nisbet, remember, saw the State as absolutely menacing; not for him any Madisonian agonizing about how to balance the factions against the general good, because he saw no problem with factions having all the power. Nobody in the political mainstream really believes any more that the centralized State is either totally evil or avoidable, or that liberalism leads inevitably to totalitarianism. The carriers of the Nisbet torch apply his principles only selectively: not to national defense, not to Social Security, not, usually, to tax policy. No conservative during the Gulf war raised the call for replacing the U.S. Army with state militias. Also, most local communities in the United States today cannot honestly be held up as exemplars of Nisbetism: People haven't been living in them long enough, and they're profoundly, irrevocably tied into the national culture in a way that medieval villagers were not. Our society is complex enough that all problems simply can't be solved locally any more.

The real lesson that *The Quest for Community* should have for us today is that the kinds of blanket dismissals of doing anything on "the national level" that fill the air should not be taken seriously. There isn't a consistent philosophy behind them that's at all applicable to the society we live in. There is a tension between local and national needs, and national-level solutions to problems do tend to produce coercion and bureaucratic inefficiency—but these issues should give rise to care and concern, not to wholesale rejection of the idea of American nationalism. Our country has fragmented culturally during the half-century since the end of the great unifying period of the Depression and World War II. Now—splintered, ghettoized, special-interest-dominated, apparently incapable of true collective effort for the sake of the common good—the last thing it needs is to be factionalized further.

Everybody can see that in the areas of defense and foreign affairs, the country has to operate as a nation, not as a loose confederation of localities. The war in the Gulf, its merits aside, surely proved that the president can persuade the country to unify around a cause, and that the federal government can carry out massive and complicated tasks with impressive competence. Perhaps people will now begin to feel a little embarrassed about making the familiar dinner table argument that Washington can't lead the country as a whole and can't carry out even simple tasks without bungling them, because there is such a dramatic counterexample at hand. The government ought to be taking on big jobs domestically too, such as improving public education and overcoming the social chaos in the ghettos. To do this requires that the sense of community, which already exists strongly around localities, be strengthened nationally. National community is not the fundamentally menacing notion that Nisbet sees it as. In fact, it's the key to our country's continued vitality.

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Size Doesn't Matter

Getting over our big-ship envy

by Scott Shuger

In concluding that the battleship *Iowa* explosion could only have been the result of a demented mind, the official investigators probably weren't mindful of the *Princeton* episode of 1844. On February 28 of that year, Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, who in his previous job as secretary of the Navy had been a vigorous advocate of naval weapons development, was a guest aboard the frigate as it cruised down the Potomac to conduct a demonstration firing of a new 12-inch gun called the "Peacemaker." Due to faulty engineering, the gun blew up when it was fired, decapitating Upshur.

Such overlooked parallels indicate that the U.S. Navy is now old enough to suffer severe memory loss. In this book,* Kenneth Hagan—a professor of history at the Naval Academy as well as its archivist and museum director—shows what's been forgotten. Hagan's a contrarian about the Navy's hallowed theme that its purpose is to command the seas with capital ships designed to engage and defeat those of our enemies. His point is that a careful reading of history shows that a big-ship battle fleet has never been that well justified by combat results. His survey suggests that big-fleet fever has always been less a matter of raison d'etre than of raison de budget and raison de looking good.

Basically, there are two different ways to make war with ships. You can let them operate individually to attack enemy merchant vessels and small individual warships (the nautical term for this is *guerre de course*), or you can have them work together in fleets designed to engage the counterpart main fleets of the enemy, which are trying to do the same (that's called *guerre d'escadre*). *Guerre d'escadre* has many of the features of conventional army warfare: massed firepower, difficult logistics, and less than optimal maneuverability—all achieved at great expense. On the other hand, *guerre de course* suggests guerrilla war: hit-and-run tactics made possible by a low profile and self-sufficiency—costing much less.

Scott Shuger is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

**This People's Navy: The Making of American Seapower.* Kenneth J. Hagan. *Free Press, $27.95.*

The godfather of the big battle fleet idea in America was a 19th-century naval officer named Alfred Thayer Mahan, an original faculty member and the second president of the Navy's think tank, the Naval War College. Mahan's 1890 opus, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, set forth the Royal Navy of Horatio Nelson as the model our navy should follow. Mahan's impact on subsequent naval developments was tremendous. Under the sway of Mahanian principles, Teddy Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet around the world, Franklin Roosevelt militated for increased battleship construction, and John Lehman urged a 600-ship navy. (And strong doses of Mahan are still a staple of the history and strategy courses taught to midshipmen and officers in training.)

From 1890 until 1941, in the U.S. Navy *guerre d'escadre* meant the primacy of the battleship. But after Pearl Harbor, the dreadnought began to give way to the aircraft carrier. At such battles as Coral Sea and Midway, carriers were far more devastating to the Japanese navy than battleships could ever have been. It may have been *guerre d'escadre*'s finest hour. But like the "gun club" admirals before them, the flyboy admirals failed to see that their weapon of choice didn't cover all the requirements of naval warfare either. In time, they too became blinded to the usefulness of submarines and other ship types and tactics by their love of big-fleet warfare.

Hagan points out that this blindness was rich in precedent. He notes that Mahan's tome consistently downplayed tactical and technical innovations, and sums it up as "a blend of history and propaganda." Indeed, Hagan reserves one of his most pointed passages to observe that Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar at the head of a wooden sailing fleet was "largely irrelevant" to the steam-powered, iron-clad American navy that was in service by the time Mahan was writing. Against the battle fleet theory, Hagan marshals many other historical counterexamples: During the Revolutionary War, America prevailed despite an inferiority in ships of the line (the big-gun battleships of the day) by devoting its scarce naval resources to small ships designed to raid the enemy's commerce. By war's end, Revolutionary privateers had seized

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600 vessels. During the Civil War, Confederate blockade runners had a 92 percent success rate in breaking past the Union's far more advanced ironclads; three Confederate raiders, operating independently of each other, destroyed over 100 Union merchant ships. In World War I, it was first the success against and then the containment of German submarines that dictated the outcome of the naval war—the war's only battle fleet engagement, the Battle of Jutland, was inconclusive, and no American battleship fired even one shot in anger. In World War II, freelancing submariners again did the most damage: In four months during 1940, German U-boats, on patrol only 6 or 8 at a time, sank 274 merchant ships. American submarines were deadlier still, accounting for 4.8 million tons of Japanese merchant shipping—more than 3.5 times the tonnage destroyed by U.S. carrier aircraft. And in the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was the small surface combatants rather than the carriers that made the "quarantine" of Castro work.

The massing of a big battle fleet was a necessity for Great Britain because of its particular geographic situation: an island nation in close proximity to rival powers. Hagan pointedly brings out the difference in the U.S. situation when he quotes Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy's 1889 request for a fleet of armored battleships: "We must have a fleet of battleships that will beat off the enemy's fleet on its approach, for it is not to be tolerated that the United States . . . is to submit to an attack on the threshold of its harbors." Since Tracy's statement, no foreign fleet has made that approach to our coasts, but the credit goes more to the wide expanses of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans than to our big ships, which didn't make any difference at Pearl Harbor.

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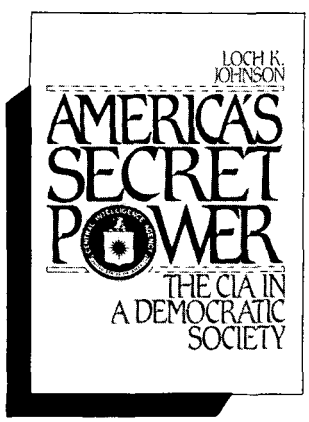

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C'est la guerre d'escadre

This raises an interesting point: Does the United States Navy need big battle fleets to protect its overseas outposts—or is it the other way around? The rise of the steam-powered transoceanic navy led America to an interest in overseas coaling and maintenance facilities. Expansion into the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii soon followed. And the desire to obtain and protect a canal that could readily unite our Pacific and Atlantic battle fleets drove American intervention in Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. The rise of our big navy multiplied possible flashpoints and lowered crisis thresholds: In 1897 Teddy Roosevelt directed the Naval War College to study what force would be needed to repel the Japanese from our then-new presence in Hawaii, while in 1891, the U.S. nearly went to war with Chile over the deaths of two sailors in a Valparaiso bar fight.

Hagan calls these developments "the new naval imperialism," which he notes differs fundamentally from the "gunboat diplomacy" we practiced for most of the 19th century. The latter had the legitimate goal of protecting American citizens who found themselves endangered in foreign lands, while the former was nothing less than the occupation of foreign countries in order to alter their political and social structures to benefit our overseas naval operations. The earlier idea was better, argues Hagan. Naval buildups pursued to protect naval buildups make no independent sense.

It's this self-referential aspect of *guerre d'escadre* that's the big problem with it. Viewed through the lens of Hagan's historical exposition, America's big carrier navy can be seen to be a reductio ad absurdum. Although carrier aviation's greatest strength is its ability to destroy shipping and land targets that are otherwise inaccessible, a huge proportion of today's carrier weapons are designed to keep the carrier itself from being sunk: *External* firepower is actually quite low. At bottom, the Mahanian view calls for a self-involvement with technology and weapons that too readily leaves out real military and geopolitical considerations. A corollary to the self-reference problem

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is a potentially disastrous kind of inflexibility. Our carrier fleet was designed to fight in the open ocean against other blue-water navies. And yet this winter found half of all our carriers deployed in the Persian Gulf, where they operated in restrictive waterways against land targets. They adapted well, but one couldn't help but think of the *Vincennes* disaster, in which another capital ship designed to fight on the open ocean couldn't make the switch.

Because navies can go quietly over the horizon in ways armies can't, naval development presents a country with unique opportunities for going wrong. When a continental power like the United States disregards its natural defense barriers and builds big battle fleets, it has turned from geopolitical realities towards a troublesome kind of make-believe. This kind of navy exists only to defeat other navies that are similarly inclined. That's justifiable only if other navies like that already exist. (Modern history's best candidate for one is probably the Japanese navy from 1900 to 1945, although it's arguable that Japanese overseas ambitions were in part a response to our own previous expansions.) But what's troubling is that once the Mahanian turn is made it doesn't much matter if these other global navies exist.

Since the early 1950s, the United States Navy has developed a force of big-deck aircraft carriers, half of them nuclear-powered, to protect us from an alleged Soviet naval expansionism that never quite materialized. It's true that in Brezhnev's heyday, the Soviets operated far from home waters out of a large facility in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, but this is more of the chicken-or-egg problem—*we* built the base there to support *our* overseas navy. Is the new generation of Soviet aircraft carriers sufficient reason to press forward with more of our own? No—they were built in response to our carriers, and they fall short anyway. The Soviets do operate the world's largest submarine navy, but since the best way to sink a submarine is with another submarine, that doesn't justify building more carriers either. And most of the other Soviet naval developments—the long range aircraft, the cruise missiles—are threats primarily because we have invested so heavily in the capital ships they target.

So great is the internal momentum of the big-fleet fixation that it has even taken the withering of the Soviet navy under Gorbachev completely in stride. Hagan notes that John Lehman has credited the Soviets' recent naval retrenchment to the carrier-based fleet buildup he spearheaded. But beware: A theory that is "confirmed" by all possible evidence is too good to be true.

Unsheik

The coming obsolescence of oil

by Gregg Easterbrook

I've got 20 bucks that says: One hundred years from now, petroleum will be worthless. Historically, many of the commodities that held dominant and seemingly indelible positions in world commerce during one century became afterthoughts to the century that followed. Bronze, salt, tea, dyes, cotton, coal, and rubber are among the items it once seemed humanity could not live without. Why did they fade? When a substance holds great value, there is enormous incentive to discover substitutes or invent alternatives. Petroleum, essential to world economies today, will fall to this progression in its turn, replaced by new fuels such as methane and pure hydrogen, or whole new philosophies toward energy, such as collecting it from sunlight in space. That's why the Saudis are smart to be selling oil as fast as they can pump the stuff, rather than conserving it for their grandchildren. As the sands drift back over the Persian Gulf berms, future desert dwellers may be annoyed that their forefathers didn't sell even more when they had the chance.

But that is the shape of things to come. The shape of things in this, the century of oil, is the subject of Daniel Yergin's excellent book,* the timeliest work of nonfiction in many years. *The Prize* is a book of great depth, texture, and length, coming in at 781 pages, not counting afterwords and notes. This work should fare well in many award competitions.

Structurally, *The Prize* reads like the effort of a historian. Although the author is best known as an

Gregg Easterbrook is a contributing editor of Newsweek, The Atlantic, *and* The Washington Monthly.

**The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power.* Daniel Yergin. *Simon & Schuster, $27.50.*

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energy analyst who makes his living selling reports to corporate clients through a consultancy called Cambridge Energy Research Associates, Yergin also has an academic background as a lecturer at Harvard. He first came to the public eye during the gas crisis years as coauthor of *Energy Future*, a compendium of gloomy projections that has not weathered well; but then practically everybody was snookered by the seventies conventional wisdom that we would soon freeze in the dark. Today, the output of Cambridge Associates deals mainly with routine matters like oil price and shipment trends, the old $64,000 question of whether oil is running out no longer engaging much interest.

Oil über alles

As a work of history, *The Prize* is extraordinary and highly admirable. Like most histories, it contains a great deal of material rewritten from volumes appearing before, but Yergin adds fresh details obtained through original research in several archives around the world. He covers the origin of the oil economy and its growth in the Western, Arabian, and Indonesian worlds in rewarding depth.

But *The Prize* exhibits three failings, all pardonable given its many virtues. First, the great tale of oil is told largely through the eyes of the princes, sheiks, prime ministers, Rockefellers, and generals who wrestled over it at the highest tiers. We rarely hear what oil meant to people: what working at the early fields and refineries was like, what crewing a tanker or doing chemistry at an old Esso refinery was like, what effect this dark commodity and the political struggles regarding its control had on those below the elite level. Focusing on the prince is a common fault of historical accounts, partly because there are more primary source documents concerning the actions and thoughts of the upper classes. But by around page 500, the reconstructed conversations among Great-Men-Astride-the-Landscape-of-Lesser-Mortals began to grow wearisome. I found myself longing for the concerns of real human beings at the level where most of us live.

Second, *The Prize* suffers from the traditional author's insistence on inflating the significance of the subject matter at hand—a disappointing and unnecessary exercise here, since Yergin's subject needs no introduction.

To Yergin, practically all major political events of the 20th century can be interpreted as a struggle to secure supplies of fossil fuel. Tell that to the Vietcong, the African National Congress, Theodore Herzl, Mahatma Ghandi, the mujahedin, or the Sandanistas, to name a few. Yergin is correct to document how oil shortages handicapped both the German and Japanese militaries in World War II, rendering victory more accessible to the allies than it might otherwise have been. But it seems well off the mark to portray Hitler's war planning as motivated primarily by anxiety about oil. Didn't hatred of Bolsheviks, Poles, and Jews, revenge for the Versailles Treaty, desire for an empire, and madness have something to do with it? And though the pre-Pearl Harbor Western embargo rendered imperial Japan insecure about its oil supplies, the fanatical militarism rising in that country probably would have manifested itself as war even if Tokyo had been sitting on a bigger field than Spindletop.

In a typical example of overselling, Yergin mentions the famous moment during MacArthur's landing at the Philippines when the main U.S. fleet was drawn off by a feint, and ships under Admiral Takeo Kurita found themselves in position to make quick work of the lightly protected troops going ashore at Leyte Gulf. "But just 40 miles away from the invasion beach," Yergin writes, "Kurita abruptly pulled off and sailed away. After the war, one of the Japanese admirals was asked why. 'Because,' he replied, 'of shortage of fuel.'" That may well have been the excuse fallen back on after the fact. Most historians have attributed Kurita's retreat to a heroic counterthrust by a small contingent of U.S. destroyers in the gulf, which charged the oncoming attackers with such total disregard for danger that the Japanese commander assumed they must have been the spearhead of a much larger force that had set a trap for him.

Finally, after asking us to bear with him for 800 pages, Yergin exits stage right from *The Prize* without suggesting anything about the future of oil or what energy policy ought to be. The book ends with a tacked-on chapter about Kuwait that's already stale, then some very general ruminating regarding the *Exxon Valdez* and oil mergers.

Yergin has been criticized for sidestepping issues like energy taxes that might upset his consultancy's corporate clients. The criticism is deserved. Putting Yergin on TV as an energy analyst now is a little like rolling out Henry Kissinger for commentary on business opportunities in China, if you'll pardon an analogy between a very congenial and well-liked man and a has-been egomaniac.

Having clients to please clouds judgment. I doubt Yergin altered any of his historical analysis with the corporate subscriber list in mind, because most of his clients will read only the articles about *The Prize*, not the text itself. But when the time came to assess what all the historical analysis leads up to and provide some conclusions, Yergin took the easy way out.

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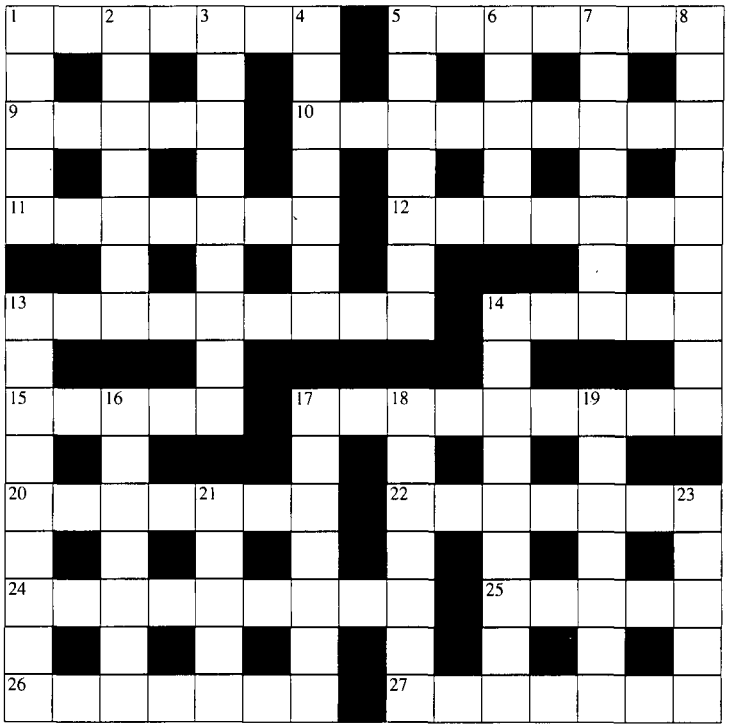
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



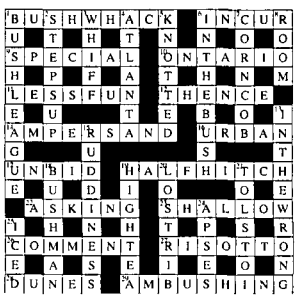
ACROSS

1. New England athlete specializing in defense? (7)
5. Sloppy slime is effective weapon. (7)
9. Looked for secrets in steno's education. (5)
10. Ritual destruction of ermine with TNT. (9)
11. Hint: CIA upset about import from Italy. (7)
12. Trooped in formation to stop project. (7)
13. Art schism developed from religious holiday. (9)
14. Dispute about university changing gear. (5)
15. Macho selection for flavor. (5)
17. Make unit start attack on business. (9)
20. Poe's pun misstated gets business going. (5,2)
22. Finished finally with links area. (7)
24. Mediterranean vessel disturbed even Latin. (9)
25. Austin school lad becoming mature. (5)
26. Business end of 5 Across around center of the cluttered drawer. (7)
27. Assembled the last expensive airplane. (7)

DOWN

1. Button up in and around cap. (5)
2. More irritable about half of fly coming back in row. (7)
3. Country depending on one's being absorbed by another country. (9)
4. Neat taking in returned suit, topless, for isotope. (7)
5. Adapts and must eat stew. (7)
6. Set up ruse before start of race to be more confident. (5)
7. Bird climbing to middle of sticks is ocean threat. (7)
8. Sociable type makes voter exert without effort. (9)
13. Type of wife who makes mom a clown. (6,3)
14. Deputy becomes neat later. (9)
16. Smart around a tool. (7)
17. Used softly in ideal form. (7)
18. Remnants of tart set around. (7)
19. Strange luaus cooked before international organization. (7)
21. Meaning serfs returning. (5)
23. After end of long march, urge for military service. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus. Dinesh D'Souza. *Free Press, $19.95.* If you live in a cave and have missed the fuss about "political correctness" on campus, this book will bring you up to speed. The author, an alumnus of Dartmouth College and the Reagan White House, describes with clarity and fair-mindedness the recent disputes at six elite universities. In D'Souza's view, the common thread in the fights over the Western canon at Stanford, free expression at Michigan, race-based faculty hiring at Duke, and a number of other conflicts is what he calls the "victims' revolution."

D'Souza adduces some disturbing evidence in support of his thesis that misguided efforts to compensate for past injustice have contributed to a harsh climate of intolerance and intimidation. In some extreme cases, blind pursuit of "diversity" has caused administrators to adopt grotesquely disparate sets of admissions standards for different racial groups. These policies usually don't help their intended beneficiaries, since unqualified blacks and Hispanics are admitted even when there is little hope that they will be able to do the work demanded of them.

D'Souza makes a compelling case against affirmative action as it is practiced at American universities like Berkeley. Where he overreaches, in my opinion, is in blaming preferential treatment for causing bigotry. D'Souza thinks the recent spate of racial incidents on progressive northern campuses is actually a backlash by white students against quotas. Many students—and not only white ones—make an argument that group preferences are unjust, and many more who don't want to speak publicly against them object in private. But D'Souza doesn't muster any plausible evidence that students seething with resentment at the unfairness of affirmative action are the same ones burning crosses and daubing graffiti. In some cases, like that of David Duke, affirmative action becomes a pretext for expressions of racism. But the bigotry itself almost certainly has deeper roots.

D'Souza ends his book with several proposals for reform, the most promising of which is to replace race-based admissions with affirmative action based on financial need. Giving some preference to students who have overcome economic disadvantage (but who are qualified enough to survive academically) would do much to foster real diversity, without the inequity and stigma that attach to discrimination based on race.

—*Jacob Weisberg*

Inside the KGB: Myth and Reality. Vladimir Kuzichkin. *Pantheon, $25.00.* There is certainly no lack of books about the KGB in the West. John Barron, Stanislav Levchenko, Oleg Gordievsky, and scores of other experts on Soviet espionage have contributed immensely to the understanding of what is going on in the huge building dominating Dzerzhinsky Square in Moscow. Yet Vladimir Kuzichkin's book offers a glance at the KGB from quite an unusual angle. Up to now this agency has been almost universally portrayed as an omnipotent, unscrupulous, and highly effective intelligence service for which no task is too difficult. This is partly true.

But as Soviets like myself understand, the KGB is not a separate island within Soviet society. It is an integral part. Therefore, all the ills of the society—corruption, patronage, overwhelming bureaucracy, and lack of initiative—do not spare the KGB. As it appears from Kuzichkin's book, the KGB suffers as much from the incompetent intrusions of Communist party apparatchiks as any other institution in the Soviet Union.

For years I lived under the misapprehension that the KGB was probably the only remaining Soviet institution that doesn't do its hiring by nepotism. Kuzichkin's book shattered that illusion. For example, he mentions the name of Valery Maisuradze, the son of the KGB deputy chief in Georgia, who surely made his way to the First Directorate with help from his father. (Why did he prefer the First Directorate to staying in his native Georgia? Because it promises lucrative careers overseas. Intelligence work means dollars instead of worthless rubles.)

Coincidence or not, about 10 years ago a person named Valery Maisuradze came to the TASS news agency of the USSR, where I had worked for more than 13 years; after a brief stint at the foreign desk he went straight to our bureau in London, where he worked for several years before the British swept him away during one of their regular purges of the Soviet community.

We were not friends, but I talked to him a couple of times and edited a lot of his news stories. My opinion: Nothing can be further apart than this man and everything that is associated with the word "intelligence." If this Maisuradze and the one mentioned in the book are the same person, I feel sorry for the KGB.

Nepotism is a very dangerous disease, capable of destroying any institution. It can never be limited. Once a relative of a high official is accepted to a lucrative position, say, at the KGB, there will be scores of other bureaucrats wanting the same favor. It is hard to say no without offending them and making highly placed enemies.

So even if this process started at the

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KGB only 10 years ago, its intelligence-gathering capacities should be significantly eroded by now. Would all these sons and in-laws risk their dollar salaries to obtain useful information or recruit an agent? I bet they wouldn't, especially since they have highly placed relatives to protect them. So they probably prefer to clip newspapers, send Moscow phony reports, and collect their hard-currency paychecks.

That's why the KGB, as Kuzichkin points out, can count its recruited agents in any given country on the fingers of one hand. Those grandsons and nephews want to protect their dollars and rubles regardless of their performance. In part, this is what lies behind the recent aggressive speeches by KGB Chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov, who viciously attacked the reformist forces in the Soviet Union.

Besides offering a window into the KGB culture, Kuzichkin provides these revelations:

➤Worried by the rapprochement between Teheran and Washington in 1961, the Kremlin ordered the KGB to assassinate the Shah.

Reza Pahlavi was to be killed by the explosion of a powerful bomb hidden in a car parked on one of his usual routes. A radio-operated detonator had to be triggered by an unnamed illegal KGB agent who worked undercover in Iran.

Only a miracle saved the life of the Iranian monarch. When the Shah's motorcade passed near the Volkswagen stuffed with explosives, the agent, obviously nervous, pressed the button on the remote control device but didn't hold it long enough for the signal to go through. The car drove on, oblivious.

➤In 1979, before the Soviet invasion, the KGB tried to assassinate Afghani leader Hafizullah Amin, who had ousted and killed Afghanistan's pro-Moscow president, Noor Mohammed Taraki.

This task was assigned to KGB Lt. Colonel Mikhail Talybov. Posing as an Afghani citizen, he was sent to Kabul and managed to infiltrate the staff of the presidential palace. Working in the kitchen as a cook, Talybov on several occasions added poison to Amin's food and drinks. But the Afghani ruler was smart enough never to drink from only one glass or eat from one dish at a time. Talybov's mission came to nothing. (Had this operation succeeded, one wonders what course the events in Afghanistan might have taken.)

➤Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, appointed foreign minister of Iran in 1979, was an agent of the Soviet military intelligence service in his youth, having been recruited while studying in the United States. But Ghotbzadeh eventually grew disillusioned with communism and stopped all cooperation with the USSR. Moreover, he developed an acute animosity toward the Soviets, which he showed amply during his tenure as foreign minister.

The Kremlin was so angry with him that it ordered the KGB to destroy him politically, and if possible, physically. The natural course of events played into the hands of the KGB. Ghotbzadeh fell out of grace with Ayatollah Khomeini and was arrested. Nevertheless, the KGB decided to hammer one more nail into his coffin. Its residency in Teheran fabricated a false CIA cable to an unnamed American agent in Iran. The contents of the dispatch made it clear that this agent was in fact the former Iranian

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THE TRUTH ABOUT CHERNOBYL

GRIGORI MEDVEDEV
Foreword by Andrei Sakharov

Everything we know about the accident, other than the scant data in official reports, we know from Grigori Medvedev, a former chief engineer in Chernobyl who was commissioned by the Soviets to determine what happened.

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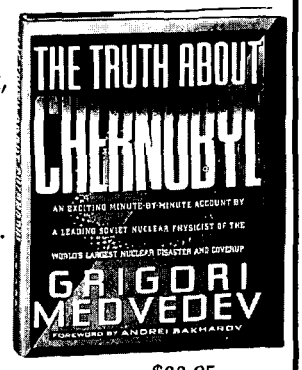

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foreign minister. The KGB planted the parcel containing the cable in a way that the Iranian security service could easily discover it. Ghotbzadeh was shot in September of 1982.

—*Maxim Kniazkov*

Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning. Jacques Barzun. *University of Chicago Press, $24.95.* **The Classroom Crucible: What Really Works, What Doesn't, and Why.** Edward Pauly. *Basic, $22.95.* Twenty years after my first long day as a teacher, I am convinced that the essence of teaching is not logic, not skill; the essence of teaching is moral action. And if the experts who would tell teachers what to do cannot figure out a way to test for the real qualities of teacherliness—for humor, for depth of knowledge, for compassion, for tolerance, for ambiguity, for steel resolve—then I would invite them to shut up.

And them, in this case, means Jacques Barzun. His *Begin Here* is billed as a "practical, positive program for better schools," but it amounts to a crotchety collection of short polemics that reveals nothing so much as how out-of-touch Barzun is with classroom realities. Complaining that "during the last 50 years, nearly everything done in school has tended toward the discontinuous, the incoherent, the jiggly," Barzun seems to be typical of so many of our governors, corporate executives, newspaper editors, secretaries of education, and everybody's Aunt Mabel in insisting that his own graduation signaled the end of the golden age of education; school standards have been declining ever since. Barzun bolsters this contention with a broad swipe at everything from computer spell checkers to sex education.

My favorite part of the book is his "eyewitness account" of a seventh-grade history class. Barzun carps that history is not well served by such varied activity as role-playing, small-group discussions, or trips to national monuments. To Barzun, classroom teamwork is a "cowardly evasion." Insisting that "the whole class should attend to the same thing," Barzun would have seventh graders read Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*. Each student could then write a précis. Students writing the best précis would read them aloud to their classmates. I guess it's not surprising that a man who dismisses all children's books and magazines except *Cricket* as just "a step up from . . . comic books" would want 12-year-olds to read Prescott, but I wonder how many times he's tried out this ideal lesson plan with real 12-year-olds. Being locked up in a room with 25 seventh graders and a stack of *Conquest of Mexico*s is as good a definition of hell as I've heard.

Barzun supports his contention that child psychology and specific teaching methods are pretty much worthless by pointing out that millions of mothers without special training have taught their infants to read and write. Indeed. In contrast, Edward Pauly is not so quick to dismiss the complexities of a teacher's craft. Drawing on many conversations with teachers as well as extensive research, he concludes that the teacher can't be separated from the taught, that teaching and learning are intertwined in complex ways—a notion that rarely occurs to outside advisers.

In Pauly's words, "The value of a teacher's experience is not contained in a bagful of techniques that can be applied in the same way in every classroom but in an understanding of the process of adjusting to each new group of students." Too many blue-ribbon panels on excellence in the schools offer nothing more than a bagful of prescriptions, a sort of Lydia Pinkham general cure-all. In contrast, Pauly spends a lot of time talking about how schools might adjust individual classroom dynamics to better meet the specific needs of both teachers and children; he also has a section on how parents can directly and powerfully influence the quality of their children's education. I'm not convinced that all his proposals are practical—shifting troublesome kids from classroom to classroom, for example—but I applaud his microcosmic approach to educational matters. I applaud his recognition that you can't talk about education in the school without talking about specific teachers and specific children in specific schools.

Pauly puts a positive spin on the lack of predictability in the classroom:

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"Pluralistic policies give every classroom a chance to succeed." He insists that the central question about schools should not be "why doesn't anything work?" but "why do some classrooms succeed while others in the same school don't?" This is a profoundly different question. A harder question too—one Barzun doesn't try to answer.

Although acknowledging that teaching presents "a set of difficulties," Barzun insists "there is no mystery" to teaching. I disagree. Knowing the material and having a passion to communicate it *are* critical to good teaching. But 20 years in classrooms have convinced me that what it takes to make a good teacher also has a lot to do with mystery.

Sound messy? You bet. Only outside experts ever claim that teaching is a neat and tidy business. When Edward Abbey died last year, I knew I had lost a friend, someone who got closer to what I'm about as a teacher than any number of ivory tower sages. In his words, "A permissive society? What else? I love America because it is a confused, chaotic mess, and I hope we can keep it this way. A permissive society is a free society, the open society. The best cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy." I feel the same way about classrooms.

—*Susan Ohanian*

Hilary's Trial. Jonathan Groner. *Simon & Schuster, $21.45*. Like everybody else in Washington, I knew something about the custody dispute over Hilary Foretich before reading *Hilary's Trial*. Now I know a lot.

Hilary was born a few months after Elizabeth Morgan and Eric Foretich were married and a few days after Elizabeth moved out of their house. The estranged (and soon divorced) couple began sparring over Hilary; Elizabeth got custody. But Eric got substantial visitation rights, which caused the subsequent knock-down, drag-out fight. Elizabeth went to great lengths to stop Eric from seeing Hilary, because she came to believe he was sexually abusing his daughter.

For seven years, various courts dealt with the case. Groner uses his facility with the law—he is a lawyer—to defuse some of the legal issues that the public found so explosive. For example, in August 1987 the court made a key decision that propelled Hilary into hiding and Elizabeth into jail. The court denied Elizabeth's motion to stop an impending overnight visitation, finding that the evidence of past sexual abuse was "in equipoise." Groner quotes one outraged reaction to this finding: "How would you like equipoise for your daughter? Let's say she brings a note home from girl scouts. 'Dear mommy, can I go on a campout with the girl scouts? It will be supervised by people who may rape us. But they may not rape us. The chances are about 50-50.' Would you send your daughter on that camping trip with the equipoise?"

Groner notes that the court's decision was "technically correct," in that Elizabeth had to prove abuse had occurred to stop the visits, and if the evidence was evenly balanced, she

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had not met her burden of proof. But the court also relied on the fact that the visits would effectively be supervised. And that, Groner concludes, was the just result under the circumstances: When there is some evidence of sexual abuse but not enough to legally condemn the father, you nonetheless protect the child as much as possible by allowing only supervised visitations.

If Hilary got justice, it was a fluke. Another court applying only the technically correct burden of proof would have to allow the alleged molester unsupervised access to the child. This is a flaw that should be fixed to accommodate both the difficulties of proving child abuse and the possibility of unfounded accusations. It can be fixed, too, by borrowing from another area of the law. For example, discrimination is also difficult to prove, so in many cases based on Title VII, the federal statute prohibiting employment discrimination, the burden of proof has evolved accordingly: The accusing party must present some evidence of discrimination, but once a *prima facie* case is made (which requires less evidence than the "preponderance" standard), the burden shifts to the accused to prove discrimination did not occur.

Hilary's story is bizarre and fascinating, but the enduring value of *Hilary's Trial* is its dissection of the legal system. There is, of course, no magical solution to the bitterness of divorce and the horror of child sexual abuse. But we could at least fix some of the obvious trouble spots, such as the burden of proof.

—*Marian K. Riedy*

American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion. Judith Shklar. *Harvard University Press, $17.95.* In the rarified world of social policy, enfranchisement and employment are usually seen as fields apart. In *American Citizenship*, however, the object is to bring them together. The vote is the fulfillment of the democratic promise of equality; employment is the minimum condition for the pursuit of individual happiness. Shklar has produced a compelling argument that the right to vote and the right to a job, neither of which was written into the Constitution, are nevertheless necessary for full and equal American citizenship.

To which this reviewer responds, "Necessary, but not sufficient." Which is to say that Shklar laments but does not explain the American rate of voter participation: Half of those eligible fail to vote in presidential elections, and two-thirds fail to vote in midterm elections, leaving the United States with the lowest rate of voter participation of any democracy in the world.

But some of that explanation is obvious—in office-holders from the president on down who say one thing in campaigns and do another once in office; in the failure of all too many office holders to meet minimal ethical standards; in campaigns run on the basis of demagogic, generic 30-second messages; in political parties that by conscious choice offer the public nothing of import to decide; in a mass media that treats the political enterprise with trivialization, disdain, and cynicism; in government that can respond to crisis very well (e.g., the San Francisco earthquake, Iraq) but *anticipates* crisis very badly (e.g., homelessness, air pollution, Iraq); in a set of public values that emphasizes individual self-seeking at the expense of the public good; and in an educational system bloated in administration, inadequate in teaching, and aimed at imparting vocational skills at the expense of civic literacy.

Any analysis, however succinct, that begins and ends with defining standings and citizenship in terms of the rights to the franchise and employment is simply inadequate in the face of increasingly oligopolistic power, great disparities of wealth, eroding institutions, lack of societal purpose, and a manipulative mass media that is, in Neil Postman's words, "amusing ourselves to death." What Shklar gives us is not enough.

To grant the right to vote without providing anything meaningful to decide is to offer the trappings of equality without the substance. To grant the right to a job without providing, for the overwhelming majority of job holders, meaningful self-fulfillment in either workplace or community is to provide the face rather than the reality of dignity.

—*Curtis B. Gans*

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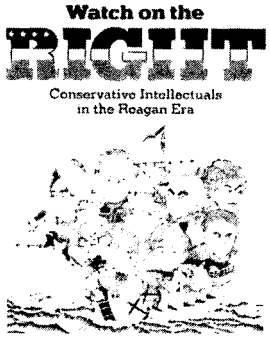

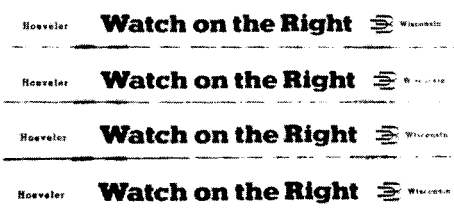

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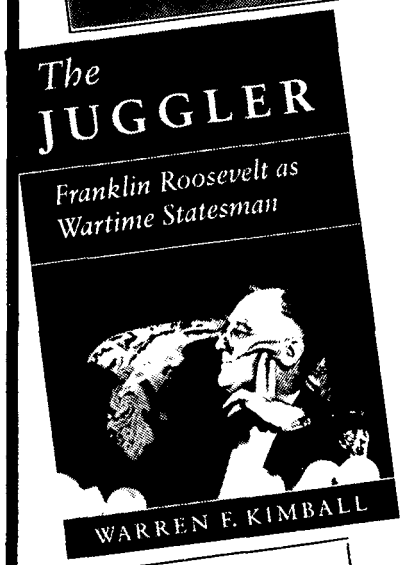

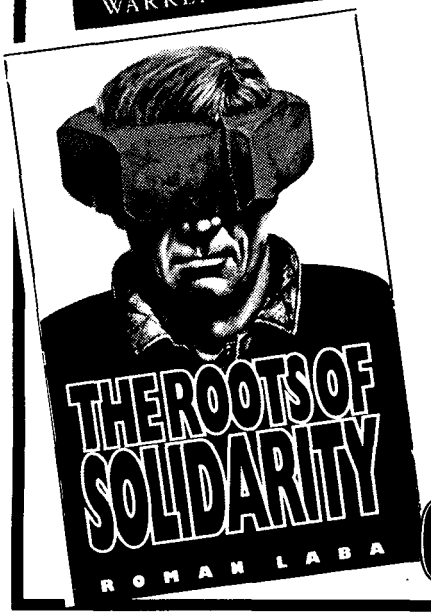

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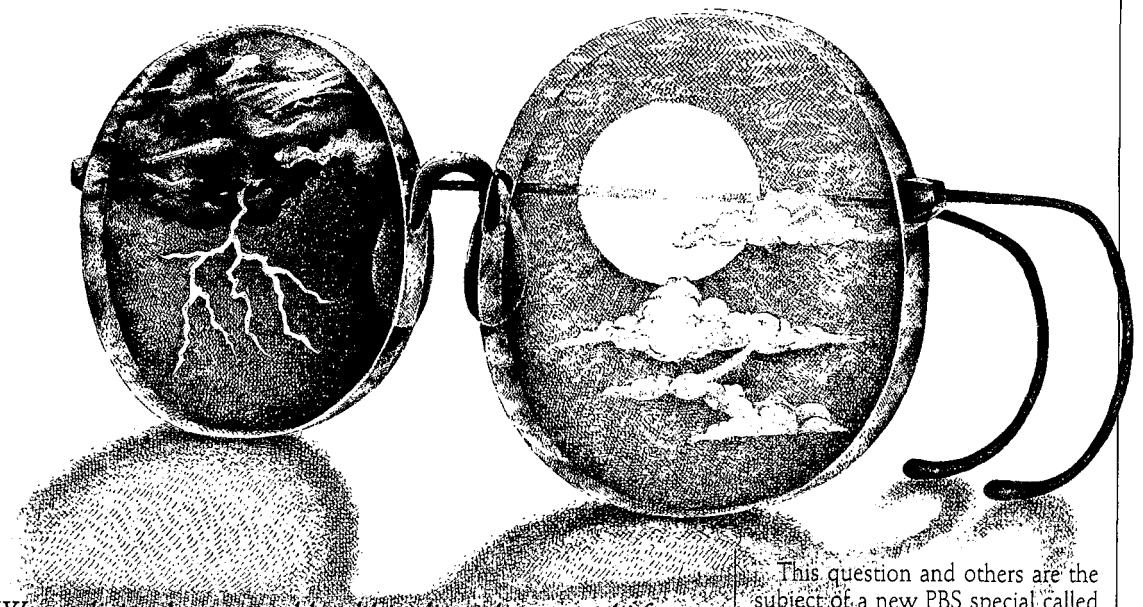

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